

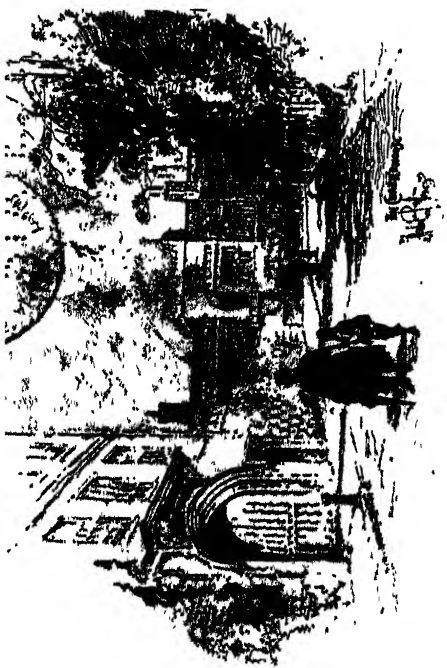
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THE POETICAL WORKS OF
THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

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J. M. DENT & Co.



THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES



EDITED, WITH A MEMOIR, BY
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DEATH'S JEST-BOOK.



[This play was published anonymously by Kelsall as "Death's Jest-Book; or the Fool's Tragedy. London, William Pickering, 1850." It was begun at Oxford in 1825, and was altered and touched up by Beddoes until near the close of his life. There exist three distinct MS. texts of this play. Of these the first, prepared for publication in 1832, bears the title: "Charonic Steps. A dramatic annual for 1833. Containing Death's Jest-Book, a dithyrambic in the florid Gothic style. By Theobald Vesselldoom." This pseudonym was altered to "Wildred Sword-Bearer" and to "Sir Theobald Grimbottle," being finally discarded altogether. The second text is substantially that which Kelsall printed. The third, of which Act the First only exists, is entitled: "Death's Jest-Book; or the Day will Come." In the present reprint the text of Kelsall is adhered to, except in one or two instances where it has appeared to the editor that text A gives a better reading.]

————— δημαγωγεῖ
 ἐν τοῖς ἄνω νεκροῖσι, 420
 κάστιν τὰ πρῶτα τῆς ἐκεῖ μοχθηρίας.

* * * * *
 Χωρῶμεν ἐς πολυρρόδους
 λειμῶνας ἀνθεμώδεις, 450
 τὸν ἡμέτερον τρόπον,
 τὸν καλλιχορώτατον,
 παίζοντες, ὃν ὀλβιαί
 Μοῖραι ξυνάγουσιν.

ΜΟΝΟΙΣ ΓΑΡ ἙΜΙΝ ἙΛΙΟΣ
 ΚΑΙ ΦΕΓΓΟΣ ἙΛΑΡΟΝ ἙΣΤΙΝ
 ὍΣΟΙ ΜΕΜΨΗΜΕΘ'.

Χορός Μυστων.

Aristoph. Ranæ. Ed. Dindorf Oxon 1835.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

MELVERIC ; Duke of MUNSTERBERG.

ADALMAR ;
ATHULF ; } His sons.

WOLFRAM ; a knight.
ISBRAND ; the court-fool. } Brothers.

THORWALD ; Governor in the Duke's absence.

MARIO ; a Roman.

SIEGFRIED ; a courtier.

ZIBA ; an Egyptian slave.

HOMUNCULUS MANDRAKE ; Zany to a mountebank.

SIBYLIA.

AMALA ; Thorwald's daughter.

IOAN.

*Knights, Ladies, Arabs, Priests, Sailors, Guards,
and other attendants.*

The Dance of Death.

SCENE: in the first act at Ancona, and afterwards
in Egypt: in the latter acts at the town of
Grüssau, residence of the Duke of Munster-
berg, in Silesia.

TIME: the end of the thirteenth century.



DEATH'S JEST-BOOK;
OR THE FOOL'S TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Port of Ancona.*

Enter MANDRAKE and JOAN.

Mandr.

AM I a man of gingerbread that you should mould me to your liking? To have my way, in spite of your tongue and reason's teeth, tastes better than Hungary wine; and my heart beats in a honey-pot now I reject you and all sober sense: so tell my master, the doctor, he must seek another zany for his booth, a new wise merry Andrew. My jests are cracked, my coxcomb fallen, my hauble confiscated, my cap decapitated. Toll the bell; for oh! for oh! Jack Pudding is no more!

Joan. Wilt thou away from me then, sweet Mandrake? Wilt thou not marry me?

Mandr. Child, my studies must first be ended. Thou knowest I hunger after wisdom, as the red sea after ghosts : therefore will I travel awhile.

Joan. Whither, dainty Homunculus ?

Mandr. Whither should a student in the black arts, a journeyman magician, a Rosicrucian ? Where is our country ? You heard the herald this morning thrice invite all christian folk to follow the brave knight, Sir Wolfram, to the shores of Egypt, and there help to free from bondage his noble fellow in arms, Duke Melferic, whom, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, wild pagans captured. There, Joan, in that Sphynx land found Raimund Lully those splinters of the philosopher's stone with which he made English Edward's gold. There dwell hoary magicians, who have given up their trade and live sociably as crocodiles on the banks of the Nile. There can one chat with mummies in a pyramid, and breakfast on basilisk's eggs. Thither then, Homunculus Mandrake, son of the great Paracelsus ; languish no more in the ignorance of these climes, but aboard with alembic and crucible, and weigh anchor for Egypt.

Enter ISBRAND.

Isbr. Good morrow, brother Vanity ! How ? soul of a pickle-herring, body of a spagirical toss-pot, doublet of motley, and mantle of pilgrim, how art thou transmuted ! Wilt thou desert our brotherhood, fool sublimate ? Shall the motley chapter no longer boast thee ? Wilt thou forswear the

order of the bell, and break thy vows to Momus?
Have mercy on Wisdom and relent.

Mandr. Respect the grave and sober, I pray thee. To-morrow I know thee not. In truth, I mark that our noble faculty is in its last leaf. The dry rot of prudence hath eaten the ship of fools to dust; she is no more seaworthy. The world will see its ears in a glass no longer; So we are laid aside and shall soon be forgotten; for why should the feast of asses come but once a year, when all the days are foaled of one mother? O world, world! The gods and fairies left thee, for thou wert too wise; and now, thou Socratic star, thy demon, the great Pan, Folly, is parting from thee. The oracles still talked in their sleep, shall our grand-children say, till Master Merri-man's kingdom was broken up: now is every man his own fool, and the world's sign is taken down.

(He sings.)

Folly hath now turned out of door
Mankind and Fate, who were before
Jove's harlequin and clown:
For goosegrass-harvest now is o'er;
The world's no stage, no tavern more,
Its sign, the Fool's ta'en down.

Isbr. Farewell, thou great-eared mind: I mark, by thy talk, that thou commencest philosopher, and then thou art only a fellow-servant out of livery. But lo! here come the uninitiated—

Enter THORWALD, AMALA, WOLFRAM,
Knights and Ladies.

Thorw. The turning tide ; the sea's wide leafless
wind,

Wherein no birds inhabit and few traffic,
Making his cave within your sunny sails ;
The eager waves, whose golden, silent kisses
Seal an alliance with your bubbling oars ;
And our still-working wishes, that impress
Their meaning on the conscience of the world,
And prompt the unready Future,—all invite you
Unto your voyage. Prosperous be the issue,
As is the promise, and the purpose good !
Are all the rest aboard ?

Wolfr. All. 'Tis a band
Of knights, whose bosoms pant with one desire,
And live but in the hope to free their prince :
All hearts beat merrily, all arms are ready.

Mandr. All, sir Knight ; even the very pigs and
capons, and poor dear great Mandrake must be
shipped too.

Wolfr. Who is this saucy fellow, that prates
between ?

Isbr. One of the many you have made.
Yesterday he was a fellow of my colour and
served a quacksalver, but now he lusts after the
mummy country, whither you are bound. 'Tis
a servant of the rosy cross, a correspondent of
the stars ; the dead are his boon companions, and
the secrets of the moon his knowledge. But had I
been cook to a chameleon, I could not sweeten
the air to his praise enough. Suffice it, of his

wisdom Solomon knew less than a bee of fossil flowers, or the ambrosian demigods of table beer. We fools send him as our ambassador to Africa ; take him with you, or be yourself our consul.

Wolfr. Aboard then in all speed ; and sink us not with thy understanding.

Mandr. I thank thee, Knight. Twice shalt thou live for this, if I bottle eternity.

[*Exit, with* JOAN.

Thorw. These letters yet, full of most weighty secrets :

Wherein, of what I dare but whisper to thee,
Since the dissemblers listen to our speech ;
Of his two sons, who love and dread ambition,
Crossing like deadly swords, teach us affright ;
And of the uncertain people, who incline
Daily more to the present influence,
Forgetting all that their sense apprehends not ;
I have at large discoursed unto the duke :
And may you find his spirit strong to bear
The bending load of such untoward tidings,
As must press hard upon him.

Amala. And forget not
Our duke, with gentle greetings, to remind
Of those who have no sword to raise for him,
But whose unarmed love is not less true,
Than theirs who seek him helmed. Farewell, sir
knight ;

They say you serve a lady in those lands,
So we dare offer you no token else
But our good wishes.

Wolfr. Thanks, and farewell to all ;
And so I take my leave.

Amala. We to our homes ;
You to the homeless waves ; unequal parting.

Wolfr. The earth may open, and the sea o'er-
whelm ;
Many the ways, the little home is one ;
Thither the courser leads, thither the helm,
And at one gate we meet when all is done.

[*Exeunt all but WOLFRAM and ISBRAND.*

Isbr. Stay: you have not my blessing yet.
With what jest shall I curse you in earnest?
Know you this garb, and him who wears it, and
wherefore it is worn? A father slain and plundered;
a sister's love first worn in the bosom, then
trampled in the dust: our fraternal bond, shall it
so end that thou savest him whom we should help
to damn? O do it, and I shall learn to laugh the
dead out of their coffins!

Wolfr. Hence with your dark demands: let's
shape our lives
After the merciful lesson of the sun,
That gilds our purpose. See the dallying waves
Caress invitingly into their bosom
My fleet ship's keel, that at her anchor bounds
As doth the greyhound at her leader's hand,
Following her eye beams after the light roe.

Isbr. Away then, away! Thus perish our good
Revenge! Unfurl your sails: let all the honest
finny folk of ocean, and those fair witty spinsters,
the mermaids, follow your luckless boats with
mockery: sea-serpents and sea-dogs and venomous
krakens have mercy on your mercy, and drag you
down to the salt water element of pity! What,
O! what spirit of our ancestral enemies would dare

to whisper through our father's bones, the tale of thy apostacy? Deliver *him* from the Saragossa irons, or the coil of the desert snake, who robbed our sire's grey hairs of a kingdom, his heart of its best loved daughter, and trod him down a despairing beggar to the crowned corpses of our progenitors? Save *him*, who slew our hopes; who cozened us of our share of this sepulchral planet, whereon our statues should have stood sceptred? Revenge, Revenge lend me your torch, that I may by its bloody fire see the furrows of this man's countenance, which once were iron, like the bar of Hell gate, and devilish thoughts peeped through them; but now are as a cage of very pitiful apes.

Wolfr. Should we repent this change? I know not why.

We came disguised into the court, stiff limbed
With desperate intent, and doubly souled
With murder's devil and our own still ghosts.
But must I not relent, finding the heart,
For which my dagger hungered, so inclined
In brotherly affection unto me?

O bless the womanish weakness of my soul,
Which came to slay, and leads me now to save!

Isbr. Hate! Hate! Revenge and blood! These are the first words my boys shall learn. What accursed poison has that Duke, that snake, with his tongue, his fang, dropped into thine ear? Thou art no brother of mine more: his soul was of that tune which shall awaken the dead: for thine! if I could make a trumpet of the devil's antlers, and blow thee through it, my lady's poodle would be scarce moved to a hornpipe. O fie on't! Thou

my brother? Say when hast thou undergone transfusion, and whose hostile blood now turns thy life's wheels? Who has poured Lethe into thy veins, and washed thy father out of heart and brains? Ha! be pale, and smile, and be prodigal of thy body's movements, for thou hast no soul more. *That* thy sire placed in thee; and, with the determination to avenge him, thou hast driven it out of doors. But 'tis well so: why lament? Now I have all the hatred and revenge of the world to myself to abhor and murder him with.

Wolfr. Thou speak'st unjustly, what thou rashly think'st;

But time must soften and convince: now leave me,

If thou hast nothing but reproach for pastime.

Isbr. Be angry then, and we will curse each other. But if thou goest now to deliver this man, come not again for fear of me and our father's spirit: for when he visits me in the night, screaming revenge, my heart forgets that my head wears a fool's cap, and dreams of daggers: come not again then!

Wolfr. O think not, brother, that our father's spirit

Breathes earthly passion more: he is with me
And guides me to the danger of his foe,
Bringing from heaven, his home, pity and pardon.
But, should his blood need bloody expiation,
Then let *me* perish. Blind these eyes, my sire,
Palsy my vigorous arm, snow age upon me,
Strike me with lightning down into the deep,
Open me any grave that earth can spare,

Leave me the truth of love, and death is lovely.

[*Exit.*]

Isbr. O lion-heartedness right asinine !
Such lily-livered meek humanity
Saves not thy duke, good brother ; it but shines
Sickly upon his doom, as moonbeams breaking
Upon a murderer's grave-digging spade.
Or fate's a fool, or I will be his fate.
What ho ! Sir Knight ! One word—Now for a
face
As innocent and lamblike as the wool
That brings a plague.

Re-enter WOLFRAM.

Wolfr. What will you more with me ?

Isbr. Go, if you must and will ; but take with
you
At least this letter of the governor's,
Which, in your haste, you dropped. I must be
honest,
For so my hate was ever. Go.

Wolfr.

And prosper !

[*Exit.*]

Isbr. Now then he plunges right into the
waters !
O Lie, O Lie, O lovely lady Lie,
They told me that thou art the devil's daughter.
Then thou art greater than thy father, Lie ;
For while he mopes in Hell, thou queen'st it
bravely,
Ruling the earth under the name of Truth,
While she is at the bottom of the well,
Where Joseph left her.

Song from the ship.

To sea, to sea ! The calm is o'er ;
 The wanton water leaps in sport,
 And rattles down the pebbly shore ;
 The dolphin wheels, the sea-cows snort,
 And unseen Mermaids' pearly song
 Comes bubbling up, the weeds among.
 Fling broad the sail, dip deep the oar .
 To sea, to sea ! the calm is o'er.

To sea, to sea ! our wide-winged bark
 Shall billowy cleave its sunny way,
 And with its shadow, fleet and dark,
 Break the caved Tritons' azure day,
 Like mighty eagle soaring light
 O'er antelopes on Alpine height.
 The anchor heaves, the ship swings free,
 The sails swell full. To sea, to sea !

Isbr. The idiot merriment of thoughtless men !
 How the fish laugh at them, that swim and toy
 About the ruined ship, wrecked deep below,
 Whose pilot's skeleton, all full of sea weeds,
 Leans on his anchor, grinning like their Hope.
 But I will turn my bosom now to thee,
 Brutus, thou saint of the avenger's order ;
 Refresh me with thy spirit, or pour in
 Thy whole great ghost. Isbrand, thou tragic fool,
 Cheer up. Art thou alone ? Why so should be
 Creators and destroyers. I'll go brood,
 And strain my burning and distracted soul
 Against the naked spirit of the world,
 Till some portent's begotten.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

*The African Coast : a woody solitude near the sea.
In the back ground ruins overshadowed by the
characteristic vegetation of the oriental regions.*

*The DUKE and SIBYLLA ; the latter sleeping in
a tent.*

Duke. Soft sleep enwrap thee : with his balm
bedew

Thy young fair limbs, Sibylla : thou didst need
The downy folding of his arms about thee.
And wake not yet, for still the starless night
Of our misfortune holds its ghostly noon.
No serpent shall creep o'er the sand to sting thee,
No springing tiger, no uncouth sea-monster,
(For such are now the partners of thy chamber,)
Disturb thy rest : only the birds shall dare
To shake the sparkling blossoms that hang o'er
thee,
And fan thee with their wings. As I watch for
thee,
So may the power, that has so far preserved us,
Now in the uttermost, now that I feel
The cold drops on my forehead, and scarce know
Whether Fear shed them there, or the near breath
Of our pursuing foes has settled on it,
Stretch its shield o'er us.

Enter ZIBA.

What bring'st, Ziba? Hope?
Else be as dumb as that thou bring'st, Despair.

Ziba. Fruits: as I sat among the boughs, and
robbed

The sparrows and their brothers of their bread,
A horde of casqued Saracens rode by,
Each swearing that thy sword should rest ere night
Within his sheath, his weapon in thy breast.

Duke. Speak lower, Ziba, lest the lady wake.
Perhaps she sleeps not, but with half-shut eyes
Will hear her fate. The slaves shall need to wash
My sword of Moslem blood before they sheath it.
Which path took they?

Ziba. Sleeping, or feigning sleep,
Well done of her: 'tis trying on a garb
Which she must wear, sooner or later, long:
'Tis but a warmer lighter death. The ruffians,
Of whom I spoke, turned towards the cedar forest,
And, as they went in, there rushed forth a lion
And tore their captain down. Long live the lion!
We'll drink his tawny health: he gave us wine.
For, while the Moors in their black fear were flying,
I crept up to the fallen wretch, and borrowed
His flask of rubious liquor. May the prophet
Forgive him, as I do, for carrying it!
This for to-day: to-morrow hath gods too,
Who'll ripen us fresh berries, and uncage
Another lion on another foe.

Duke. Brave Arab, thanks. But saw'st thou from
the heights
No christian galley steering for this coast?

Ziba. I looked abroad upon the wide old world,
 And in the sky and sea, through the same clouds,
 The same stars saw I glistening, and nought else.
 And as my soul sighed unto the world's soul,
 Far in the north a wind blackened the waters,
 And, after that creating breath was still,
 A dark speck sat on the sky's edge : as watching
 Upon the heaven-girt border of my mind
 The first faint thought of a great deed arise,
 With force and fascination I drew on
 The wished sight, and my hope seemed to stamp
 Its shade upon it. Not yet is it clear
 What, or from whom, the vessel.

Duke.

Liberty !

Thou breakest through our dungeon's wall of waves,
 As morning bursts the towery spell of night.
 Horse of the desert, thou, coy arrowy creature,
 Startest like sunrise up, and, from thy mane
 Shaking abroad the dews of slumber, boundest
 With sparkling hoof along the scattered sands,
 The livelong day in liberty and light.
 But see, the lady stirs. Once more look out,
 And thy next news be safety. [*Exit ZIBA.*

Hast thou gathered

Rest and refreshment from thy desert couch,
 My fair Sibylla ?

Sibyl.

Deeply have I slept.

As one who hath gone down unto the springs
 Of his existence and there bathed, I come
 Regenerate up into the world again.
 Kindest protector, 'tis to thee I owe
 This boon, a greater than my parents gave.
 Me, who had never seen this earth, this heaven,

The sun, the stars, the flowers, but shut from
nature

Within my dungeon birthplace lived in darkness,
Me hast thou freed from the oppressor's chain,
And godlike given me this heaven, this earth,
The flowers, the stars, the sun. Methinks it were
Ingratitude to thank thee for a gift
So measurelessly great.

Duke. As yet, sweet lady,
I have deserved but little thanks of thine.
We've not yet broken prison. This wall of waves
Still towers between us and the world of men ;
That too I hope to climb. Our true Egyptian
Hath brought me news of an approaching ship.
When that hath borne thee to our German shore,
And thou amongst the living tastest life,
And gallants shall have shed around thy presence
A glory of the starry looks of love,
For thee to move in, thank me then.

Sibyl. I wish not
To leave this shady quiet bower of life.
Why should we seek cruel mankind again ?
Nature is kinder far : and every thing
That lives around us, with its pious silence,
Gives me delight : the insects, and the birds
That come unto our table, seeking food,
The flowers, upon whose petals Night lays down
Her dewy necklace, are my dearest playmates.
O let us never leave them.

Duke. That would be
To rob thy fate of thee. In other countries
Another godliker mankind doth dwell,
Whose works each day adorn and deify

The world their fathers left them. Thither shalt thou,

For among them must be the one thou'rt born for.
Durst thou be such a traitress to thy beauty
As to live here unloving and unloved ?

Sibyl. Love I not thee ? O, if I feel beside thee
Content and an unruffled calm, in which
My soul doth gather round thee, to reflect
Thy heavenly goodness : if I feel my heart
So full of comfort near thee, that no room
For any other wish, no doubt, remains ;
Love I not thee ?

Duke. Dear maiden, thou art young.
Thou must see many, and compare their merits
Ere thou can'st choose. Esteem and quiet friendship
Oft bear Love's semblance for awhile.

Sibyl. I know it ;
Thou shalt hear how. A year and more is past
Since a brave Saxon knight did share our prison ;
A noble generous man, in whose discourse
I found much pleasure : yet, when he was near me,
There ever was a pain which I could taste
Even in the thick and sweetest of my comfort :
Strange dread of meeting, greater dread of parting :
My heart was never still : and many times,
When he had fetched me flowers, I trembled so
That oft they fell as I was taking them
Out of his hand. When I would speak to him
I heard not, and I knew not what I said.
I saw his image clearer in his absence
Than near him, for my eyes were strangely
troubled ;

And never had I dared to talk thus to him.
 Yet this I thought was Love. O self deceived !
 For now I can speak all I think to thee
 With confidence and ease. What else can that be
 Except true love ?

Duke. The like I bear to thee,
 O more than all that thou hast promised me :
 For if another being stepped between us,
 And were he my best friend, I must forget
 All vows, and cut his heart away from mine.

Sibyl. Think not on that : it is impossible.

Duke. Yet, my Sibylla, oft first love must
 perish ;
 Like the poor snow-drop, boyish love of Spring,
 Born pale to die, and strew the path of triumph
 Before the imperial glowing of the rose,
 Whose passion conquers all.

Enter ZIBA.

Ziba. O my dear lord, we're saved !

Duke. How ? Speak quickly.
 Though every word hath now no meaning in't,
 Since thou hast said ' she's saved.'

Ziba. The ship is in the bay, a christian knight
 Steps from his boat upon the shore.

Duke. Blest hour !
 And yet how palely, with what faded lips
 Do we salute this unhop'd change of fortune !
 Thou art so silent, lady ; and I utter
 Shadows of words, like to an ancient ghost,
 Arisen out of hoary centuries
 Where none can speak his language. I had
 thought

That I should laugh, and shout, and leap on high :
But see this breath of joy hath damped my soul,
Melted the icy mail, with which despair
Had clad my heart and sealed the springs of weak-
ness :

Enter a Knight.

Enter WOLFRAM, Knights, and Attendants.

Were I, and my soul disinherited
 Of immortality, which love of thee
 Gave me the proof of first. Forgotten thee !
 Ay ; if thou be not she, with whom I shared
 Few months ago that dungeon, which thy presence
 Lit with delight unknown to liberty ;
 If thou be not Sibylla, she whose semblance
 Here keepeth watch upon my breast. Behold it :
 Morning and night my heart doth beat against it.
 Thou gavest it me one day, when I admired,
 Above all crystal gems, a dewdrop globe
 Which, in the joyous dimple of a flower,
 Imaged thee tremulously. Since that time
 Many a secret tear hath mirrored thee,
 And many a thought, over this pictured beauty.
 Speak to me then : or art thou, as this toy,
 Only the likeness of the maid I loved ?
 But there's no seeming such a one. O come !
 This talking is a pitiful invention :
 We'll leave it to the wretched. All my science,
 My memory, I'd give for this one joy,
 And keep it ever secret.

Sibyl. Wolfram, thou movest me :
 With soul-compelling looks thou draw'st me to
 thee :

O ! at thy call I must surrender me,
 My lord, my love, my life.

Duke. Thy life ! O lives, that dwell
 In these three bosoms, keep your footings fast,
 For there's a blasting thought stirring among you.
 They love each other. Silence ! Let them love ;
 And let him be her love. She is a flower,
 Growing upon a grave. Now, gentle lady,

Retire, beseech you, to the tent and rest.
 My friend and I have need to use those words
 Which are bequeathed unto the miserable.
 Come hither; you have made me master of them :
 Who dare be wretched in the world beside me ?
 Think now what you have done ; and tremble at it.
 But I forgive thee, love. Go in and rest thee.

Sibyl. And he ?

Duke. Is he not mine ?

Wolfr. Go in, sweet, fearlessly.

I come to thee, before thou'st time to feel
 That I am absent.

[*Exit SIBYLLA, followed by the rest.*]

Duke. Wolfram, we have been friends.

Wolfr. And will be ever.

I know no other way to live.

Duke. 'Tis pity.

I would you had been one day more at sea.

Wolfr. Why so ?

Duke. You're troublesome to-day. Have you
 not marked it ?

Wolfr. Alas ! that you should say so.

Duke. That's all needless.

Those times are past, forgotten. Hear me, knight :
 That lady's love is mine. Now you know that,
 Do what you dare.

Wolfr. The lady ! my Sibylla !

I would I did not love thee for those words,
 That I might answer well.

Duke. Unless thou yield'st her—

For thou hast even subdued her to thy arms,
 Against her will and reason, wickedly
 Torturing her soul with spells and adjurations,—

Unless thou giv'st her the free will again
To take her natural course of being on,
Which flowed towards me with gentle love :—O

Wolfram,

Thou know'st not how she filled my soul so doing,
Even as the streams an ocean :—Give her me,
And we are friends again. But I forget :
Thou lovest her too ; a stern, resolved rival ;
And passionate, I know. Nay then, speak out :
'Twere better that we argued warmly here,
Till the blood has its way.

Wolfr.

Unworthy friend !

My lord—

Duke. Forget that I am so, and many things
Which we were to each other, and speak out.
I would we had much wine ; 'twould bring us
sooner

To the right point.

Wolfr.

Can it be so ? O Melveric !

I thought thou wert the very one of all
Who shouldst have heard my secret with delight.
I thought thou wert my friend.

Duke.

Such things as these,

Friendship, esteem, faith, hope, and sympathy,
We need no more : away with them for ever !
Wilt follow them out of the world ? Thou see'st
All human things die and decay around us.
'Tis the last day for us ; and we stand bare
To let our cause be tried. See'st thou not why ?
We love one creature : which of us shall tear her
Out of his soul ? I have in all the world
Little to comfort me, few that do name me
With titles of affection, and but one

Who came into my soul at its night-time,
 As it hung glistening with starry thoughts
 Alone over its still eternity,
 And gave it godhead. Thou art younger far,
 More fit to be beloved ; when thou appearest
 All hearts incline to thee, all prouder spirits
 Are troubled unto tears and yearn to love thee.
 O, if thou knew'st thy heart-compelling power,
 Thou wouldst not envy me the only creature
 That holds me dear. If I were such as thou,
 I would not be forgetful of our friendship,
 But yield to the abandoned his one joy.

Wolfr. Thou prob'st me to the quick : before
 to-day,
 Methought thou could'st from me nothing demand
 And I refuse it.

Duke. Wolfram, I do beseech thee ;
 The love of her's my heaven ; thrust me not from
 her ;

I have no hope elsewhere : thrust me not from her ;
 Or thou dost hurl me into hell's embrace,
 Making me the devil's slave to thy perdition.

Wolfr. O, would to heaven,
 That I had found thee struggling in a battle,
 Alone against the swords of many foes !
 Then had I rescued thee, and died content,
 Ignorant of the treasure I had saved thee.
 But now my fate hath made a wisher of me :
 O woe that so it is ! O woe to wish
 That she had never been, who is the cause !

Duke. He is the cause ! O fall the curse on him,
 And may he be no more, who dares the gods
 With such a wish ! Speak thou no more of love,

No more of friendship here : the world is open :
I wish you life and merriment enough
From wealth and wine, and all the dinky glory
Fame doth reward those with, whose love-spurned
 hearts

Hunger for goblin immortality.
Live long, grow old, and honour crown thy hairs,
When they are pale and frosty as thy heart.
Away. I have no better blessing for thee.
Wilt thou not leave me ?

Wolfr. Should I leave thee thus ?

Duke. Why not ? or must I hate thee perfectly ?
And tell thee so ? Away now I beseech you !
Have I not cut all ties betwixt us off ?
Why, wert thou my own soul, I'd drive thee from me.
Go, put to sea again.

Wolfr. Farewell then, Duke.
Methinks thy better self indeed hath parted,
And that I follow. [*Exit.*]

Duke. Thither ? Thither ? Traitor
To every virtue. Ha ! What's this thought,
Shapeless and shadowy, that keeps wheeling round,
Like a dumb creature that sees coming danger,
And breaks its heart trying in vain to speak ?
I know the moment : 'tis a dreadful one,
Which in the life of every one comes once ;
When, for the frightened hesitating soul,
High heaven and luring sin with promises
Bid and contend : oft the faltering spirit,
O'ercome by the fair fascinating fiend,
Gives her eternal heritage of life
For one caress, for one triumphant crime.—
Pitiful villain ! that dost long to sin,

And dar'st not. Shall I dream my soul is bathing
In his reviving blood, yet lose my right,
My only health, my sole delight on earth,
For fear of shadows on a chapel wall
In some pale painted Hell? No: by thy beauty,
I will possess thee, maiden. Doubt and care
Be trampled in the dust with the worm conscience!
Farewell then, Wolfram: now Amen is said
Unto thy time of being in this world:
Thou shalt die. Ha! the very word doth double
My strength of life: the resolution leaps
Into my heart divinely, as doth Mars
Upon the trembling footboard of his car,
Hurrying into battle wild and panting,
Even as my death-dispensing thought does now.
Ho! Ziba!

Enter ZIBA.

Hush! How still, how full, how lightly
I move since this resolve, about the place,
Like to a murder-charged thunder cloud
Lurking about the starry streets of night,
Breathless and masked,
O'er a still city sleeping by the sea.
Ziba, come hither; thou'rt the night I'll hang
My muffled wrath in. Come, I'll give thee work
Shall make thy life still darker, for one light on't
Must be put out. O let me joy no more,
Till Fate hath kissed my wooing soul's desire
Off her death-honied lips, and so set seal
To my decree, in which he's sepulchred.
Come, Ziba, thou must be my counsellor.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III.

A Tent on the sea-shore : sun-set.

WOLFRAM and SIBYLLA.

Wolfr. This is the oft-wished hour, when we
together

May walk upon the sea-shore : let us seek
Some greensward overshadowed by the rocks.
Wilt thou come forth ? Even now the sun is setting
In the triumphant splendour of the waves.
Hear you not how they leap ?

Sibyl. Nay ; we will watch
The sun go down upon a better day :
Look not on him this evening.

Wolfr. Then let's wander
Under the mountain's shade in the deep valley,
And mock the woody echoes with our songs.

Sibyl. That wood is dark, and all the mountain
caves
Dreadful, and black, and full of howling winds :
Thither we will not wander.

Wolfr. Shall we seek
The green and golden meadows, and there pluck
Flowers for thy couch, and shake the dew out of
them ?

Sibyl. The snake that loves the twilight is come
out,

Beautiful, still, and deadly ; and the blossoms
 Have shed their fairest petals in the storm
 Last night ; the meadow's full of fear and danger.

Wolfr. Ah ! you will to the rocky fount, and
 there

We'll see the fire-flies dancing in the breeze,
 And the stars trembling in the trembling water,
 And listen to the daring nightingale
 Defying the old night with harmony.

Sibyl. Nor that : but we will rather here remain,
 And earnestly converse. What said the Duke ?
 Surely no good.

Wolfr. A few unmeaning words,
 I have almost forgotten.

Sibyl. Tell me truly,
 Else I may fear much worse.

Wolfr. Well : it may be
 That he was somewhat angry. 'Tis no matter ;
 He must soon cool and be content.

Enter ZIBA.

Ziba. Hail, knight !
 I bring to thee the draught of welcome. Taste it.
 The Grecian sun ripened it in the grape,
 Which Grecian maidens plucked and pressed : then
 came

The desert Arab to the palace gate,
 And took it for his tribute. It is charmed ;
 And they who drink of such have magic dreams.

Wolfr. Thanks for thy care. I'll taste it pre-
 sently :
 Right honey for such bees as I.

Enter a Knight.

Knight. Up, brave Wolfram !
Arouse thee, and come forth to help and save.

Wolfr. Here is my sword. Who needs it ?

Sibyl. Is't the Duke ?

O my dark Fear !

Knight. 'Tis he. Hunting in the forest,
A band of robbers rushed on us.

Wolfr. How many ?

Knight. Some twelve to five of us ; and in the
fight,

Which now is at the hottest, my sword failed me.

Up, good knight, in all speed : I'll lead the way.

Wolfr. Sibylla, what deserves he at our hands ?

Sibyl. Assist him ; he preserved me.

Wolfr. For what end ?

Sibyl. Death's sickle points thy questions. No
delay :

But hence.

Enter a second Knight.

Wolfr. Behold another from the field,—
Thy news ?

2nd Knight. My fellow soldiers all
Bleed and grow faint : fresh robbers pour upon us,
And the Duke stands at bay unhelmed against them.

Wolfr. Brave comrade, keep the rogues before
thee, dancing

At thy sword's point, but a few moments longer ;
Then I am with thee. Farewell thou, Sibylla ;
He shall not perish thus. Rise up, my men,
To horse with sword and spear, and follow flying.

I pledge thee, lady. (*Takes the goblet.*)

Ziba (*dashing it to the ground*). Flow wine,
like Moorish gore.

Ha ! it rings well and lies not. 'Tis right metal
For funeral bells.

Wolfr. Slave, what hast thou done ?

Ziba. Pour thou unto the subterranean gods
Libations of thy blood : I have shed wine.
Now, will ye not away ?

Wolfr. Come hither, dark one :
Say, on thy life, why hast thou spilt that wine ?

Ziba. A superstitious fancy : but now hence.
'Twas costly liquor too.

Wolfr. Then finish it.
'Twas well that fortune did reserve for you
These last and thickest drops here at the bottom.

Ziba. Drink them ? forbid the prophet !

Wolfr. Slave, thou diest else.

Ziba. Give me the beaker then. — O God, I dare
not.

Death is too bitter so : alas ! 'tis poison.

Sibyl. Pernicious caitiff !

Wolfr. Patience, my Sibylla !
I knew it by thy lying eye. Thou'rt pardoned.
I may not tread upon the toothless serpent.
But for thy lord, the Saracen deal with him
As he thinks fit. Wolfram can aid no murderer.

Sibyl. Mercy ! O let me not cry out in vain :
Forgive him yet.

Wolfr. The crime I do forgive :
And Heaven, if he's forgiven there, preserve him !
O monstrous ! in the moment when my heart
Looked back on him with the old love again,

Then was I marked for slaughter by his hand.
Forgive him? 'Tis enough : 'tis much. Lie still
Thou sworded hand, and thou be steely, heart.

Enter a third Knight, wounded.

3rd *Knight*. Woe ! woe ! Duke Melveric is the
Arabs' captive.

Sibyl. Then Heaven have mercy on him !

Wolfr. So 'tis best :
He was o'erthrown and mastered by his passion,
As by a tiger. Death will burst the fetters.

3rd *Knight*. They bind him to a pillar in the
desert,

And aim their poisoned arrows at his heart.

Wolfr. O Melveric, why didst thou so to me ?

Sibylla, I despise this savage Duke,
But thus he shall not die. No man in bonds
Can be my enemy. He once was noble ;

Once very noble. Let me set him free,

And we can then be knightly foes again.

Up, up, my men, once more and follow me.

I bring him to thee, love, or ne'er return.

Sibyl. A thousand tearful thanks for this. O
Wolfram !

[Exeunt severally.]

SCENE IV.

A forest: the moonlit sea glistens between the trees

Enter Arabs with the DUKE.

1st Arab. Against this column: there's an ancient beast

Here in the neighbourhood, which to-night will thank us

For the ready meal.

[They bind the DUKE against a column.]

2nd Arab. Christian, to thy houris
Boast that we took thy blood in recompense
Of our best comrades.

1st Arab. Hast a saint or mistress?
Call on them, for next minute comes the arrow.

Duke. O Wolfram! now methinks thou lift'st
the cup.

Strike quickly, Arab.

1st Arab. Brothers, aim at him,

Enter WOLFRAM and Knights.

Wolfr. Down, murderers, down.

2nd Arab. Fly! there are hundreds on us.

(Fight—the Arabs are beaten out and pursued by the Knights.)

Wolfr. *(unbinding the Duke)*. Thank heaven,
not too late! Now you are free.

There is your life again.

Duke.

Hast thou drunk wine?

Answer me, knight, hast thou drunk wine this evening?

Wolfr. Nor wine, nor poison. The slave told me all.

O Melveric, if I deserve it from thee,
Now canst thou mix my draught. But be't forgotten.

Duke. And wilt thou not now kill me?

Wolfr.

Let us strive

Henceforward with good deeds against each other,
And may you conquer there. Hence, and for ever,
No one shall whisper of that deadly thought.
Now we will leave this coast.

Duke.

Ay, we will step

Into a boat and steer away: but whither?
Think'st thou I'll live in the vile consciousness
That I have dealt so wickedly and basely,
And been of thee so like a god forgiven?
No: 'tis impossible . . . Friend, by your leave -

[*Takes a sword from a fallen Arab.*]

O what a coward villain must I be,
So to exist.

Wolfr.

Be patient but awhile,
And all such thoughts will soften.

Duke.

The grave be patient,

That's yawning at our feet for one of us.
I want no comfort. I am comfortable,
As any soul under the eaves of Heaven:
For one of us must perish in this instant.
Fool, would thy virtue shame and crush me down;
And make a grateful blushing bondslave of me?
O no! I dare be wicked still: the murderer,

My thought has christened me, I must remain.
 O curse thy meek, forgiving, idiot heart,
 That thus must take its womanish revenge,
 And with the loathliest poison, pardon, kill me :
 Twice-sentenced, die ! [*Strikes at WOLFRAM.*

Wolfr. Madman, stand off.

Duke. I pay my thanks in steel.
 Thus be all pardoners pardoned.

[*Fight. WOLFRAM falls*

Wolfr. Murderer ! mine and my father's ! O
 my brother,
 Too true thy parting words . . Repent thou never !
Duke. So then we both are blasted : but thou
 diest,

Who dar'dst to love athwart my love, discover,
 And then forgive, my treachery. Now proclaim me.
 Let my name burn through all dark history
 Over the waves of time, as from a light-house,
 Warning approach. My worldly work is done. .

ZIBA runs in.

Ziba. They come, they come ; if thy thought be
 not yet
 Incarnate in a deed, it is too late.
 Is it a deed ?

Duke. Look at me.

Ziba. 'Tis enough.

Duke. See'st ? Know'st ? Be silent and be gone.

[*ZIBA retires : the Knights re-enter
 with SIBYLLA.*

Knight. O luckless victory ! our leader wounded.

Sibyl. Bleeding to death ! and he, whom he
 gave life to,

Even his own, unhurt and armed ! Speak,
 Wolfram :

Let me not think thou'rt dying.

Wolfr.

But I am :

Slain villanously. Had I stayed, Sibylla—

But thou and life are lost ; so I'll be silent.

Sibyl. O Melveric, why kneel'st not thou beside
 him ?

Weep'st not with me ? For thee he fell. O speak !
 Who did this, Wolfram ?

Wolfr.

'Tis well done, my Sibylla :

So burst the portals of sepulchral night

Before the immortal rising of the sun.

Sibyl. Who did this, Melveric ?

Duke.

Let him die in quiet.

Hush ! there's a thought upon his lips again.

Wolfr. A kiss, Sibylla ! I ne'er yet have kissed
 thee,

And my new bride, death's lips are cold, they say.
 Now it is darkening.

Sibyl.

O not yet, not yet !

Who did this, Wolfram ?

Wolfr.

Thou know'st, Melveric :

At the last day reply thou to that question,

When such an angel asks it : I'll not answer

Or then or now.

[Dies.]

*(SIBYLLA throws herself on the body ; the
 DUKE stands motionless ; the rest gather
 round in silence. The scene closes.)*

A voice from the waters.

The swallow leaves her nest,

The soul my weary breast ;

But therefore let the rain
 On my grave
 Fall pure ; for why complain ?
 Since both will come again
 O'er the wave.

The wind dead leaves and snow
 Doth scurry to and fro ;
 And, once, a day shall break
 O'er the wave,
 When a storm of ghosts shall shake
 The dead, until they wake
 In the grave.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The interior of a church at Ancona. The DUKE, in the garb of a pilgrim, SIBYLLA and Knights, assembled round the corpse of WOLFRAM, which is lying on a bier.

Dirge.

If thou wilt ease thine heart
 Of love and all its smart,
 Then sleep, dear, sleep ;
 And not a sorrow
 Hang any tear on your eyelashes ;
 Lie still and deep,

Sad soul, until the sea-wave washes
The rim o' the sun to-morrow,
In eastern sky.

But wilt thou cure thine heart
Of love and all its smart,
Then die, dear, die ;
'Tis deeper, sweeter,
Than on a rose bank to lie dreaming
With folded eye ;
And then alone, amid the beaming
Of love's stars, thou'lt meet her
In eastern sky.

Knight. These rites completed, say your further
pleasure.

Duke. To horse and homewards in all haste :
my business

Urges each hour. This body bury here,
With all due honours. I myself will build
A monument, whereon, in after times,
Those of his blood shall read his valiant deeds,
And see the image of the bodily nature
He was a man in. Scarcely dare I, lady,
Mock you with any word of consolation :
But soothing care, and silence o'er that sorrow,
Which thine own tears alone may tell to thee
Or offer comfort for ; and in all matters
What thy will best desires, I promise thee.
Wilt thou hence with us ?

Sibyl. Whither you will lead me.
My will lies there, my hope, and all my life
Which was in this world. Yet if I shed tear,

It is not for his death, but for my life.
 Dead is he? Say not so, but that he is
 No more excepted from Eternity.
 If he were dead I should indeed despair.
 Can Wolfram die? Ay, as the sun doth set ;
 It is the earth that falls away from light ;
 Fixed in the heavens, although unseen by us,
 The immortal life and light remains triumphant.
 And therefore you shall never see me wail,
 Or drop base waters of an ebbing sorrow ;
 No wringing hands, no sighings, no despair,
 No mourning weeds will I betake me to ;
 But keep my thought of him that is no more,
 As secret as great nature keeps his soul,
 From all the world ; and consecrate my being
 To that divinest hope, which none can know of
 Who have not laid their dearest in the grave.
 Farewell, my love,—I will not say to thee
 Pale corpse,—we do not part for many days.
 A little sleep, a little waking more,
 And then we are together out of life.

Duke. Cover the coffin up. This cold, calm
 stare

Upon familiar features is most dreadful ;
 Methinks too the expression of the face
 Is changed, since all was settled gently there ;
 And threatens now. But I have sworn to speak
 And think of that no more, which has been done—
 Now then into the bustle of the world !
 We'll rub our cares smooth there.

Knight. This gate, my lord ;
 There stand the horses.

Duke. Then we're mounted straight.

But, pri'thee friend, forget not that the Duke
Is still in prison : I am a poor pilgrim. [*Exeunt.*

Enter ISBRAND and SIEGFRIED attended.

Isbr. Dead and gone ! a scurvy burthen to this ballad of life. There lies he, Siegfried ; my brother, mark you ; and I weep not, nor gnash the teeth, nor curse : and why not, Siegfried ? Do you see this ? So should every honest man be : cold, dead, and leaden-coffined. This was one who would be constant in friendship, and the pole wanders : one who would be immortal, and the light that shines upon his pale forehead now, through yonder gewgaw window, undulated from its star hundreds of years ago. That is constancy, that is life. O mortal nature !

Siegfr. 'Tis well that you are reconciled to his lot and your own.

Isbr. Reconciled ! A word out of a love tale, that's not in my language. No, no. I am patient and still and laborious, a good contented man ; peaceable as an ass chewing a thistle ; and my thistle is revenge. I do but whisper it now : but hereafter I will thunder the word, and I shall shoot up gigantic out of this pismire shape, and hurl the bolt of that revenge.

Siegfr. To the purpose : the priests return to complete the burial.

Isbr. Right : we are men of business here. Away with the body, gently and silently ; it must be buried in my duke's chapel in Silesia : why, hereafter. (*The body is borne out by attendants.*) That way, fellows : the hearse stands at the corner

of the square : but reverently, 'tis my brother you carry. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A hall in the ducal castle of Munsterberg in the town of Grüssau in Silesia. THORWALD, ADALMAR, ATHULF, ISBRAND, SIEGFRIED; the DUKE, disguised as a pilgrim; AMALA; and other Ladies and Knights; conversing in various groups.

Athulf. A fair and bright assembly : never strode
 Old archèd Grüssau over such a tide
 Of helmed chivalry, as when to-day
 Our tourney guests swept, leaping billow-like,
 Its palace-banked streets. Knights shut in steel,
 Whose shields, like water, glassed the soul-eyed
 maidens,
 That softly did attend their armed tread,
 Flower-cinctured on the temples, whence gushed
 down
 A full libation of star-numbered tresses,
 Hallowing the neck unto love's silent kiss,
 Veiling its innocent white : and then came squires,
 And those who bore war's silken tapestries,
 And chequered heralds : 'twas a human river,
 Brimful and beating as if the great god,
 Who lay beneath it, would arise. So sways
 Time's sea, which Age snows into and makes deep,
 When, from the rocky side of the dim future,
 Leaps into it a mighty destiny,
 Whose being to endow great souls have been

Centuries hoarded, and the world meanwhile
Sate like a beggar upon Heaven's threshold,
Muttering its wrongs.

Siegfr. My sprightly Athulf,
Is it possible that you can waste the day
Which throws these pillared shades among such
beauties,
In lonely thought?

Athulf. Why I have left my cup,
A lady's lips, dropping with endless kisses,
Because your minstrels hushed their harps. Why
did they?

This music, which they tickle from the strings,
Is excellent for drowning ears that gape,
When one has need of whispers.

Siegfr. The old governor
Would have it so : his morning nap being o'er,
He's no more need of music, but is moving
Straight to the lists.

Athulf. A curse on that mock war !
How it will shake and sour the blood, that now
Is quiet in the men ! And there's my brother,
Whose sword's his pleasure. A mere savage man,
Made for the monstrous times, but left out then,
Born by mistake with us.

Adalm. (to Isbrand). Be sure 'tis heavy.
One lance of mine a wolf shut his jaws on
But cracked it not, you'll see his bite upon it :
It lies among the hunting weapons.

Isbr. Ay,
With it I saw you once scratch out of life
A blotted Moor.

Adalm. The same ; it poises well,

And falls right heavy : find it. [*Exit ISBRANI.*]

Siegfr.

For the tilt,

My brave lord Adalmar ?

Athulf.

What need of asking ?

You know the man is sore upon a couch ;

But upright, on his bloody-hoofed steed

Galloping o'er the ruins of his foes,

Whose earthquake he hath been, then will he
shout,

Laugh, run his tongue along his trembling lip,

And swear his heart tastes honey.

Siegfr.

Nay, thou'rt harsh ;

He was the axe of Mars ; but, Troy being felled,

Peace trims her bower with him.

Athulf.

Ay ; in her hand

He's iron still.

Adalm.

I care not, brother Athulf,

Whether you're right or wrong : 'tis very certain,

Thank God for it, I am not Peace's lap-dog,

But Battle's shaggy whelp. Perhaps, even soon,

Good friend of Bacchus and the rose, you'll feel

Your budding wall of dalliance shake behind you,

And need my spear to prop it.

Athulf.

Come the time !

You'll see that in our veins runs brother's blood.

A Lady. Is Siegfried here ? At last ! I've
sought for you

By every harp and every lady's shoulder,

Not ever thinking you could breathe the air

That ducal cub of Munsterberg makes frightful

With his loud talk.

Siegfr.

Happy in my error,

If thus to be corrected.

Re-enter ISBRAND.

Isbr. The lance, my lord :
A delicate tool to breathe a heathen's vein with.

The Lady. What, Isbrand, thou a soldier ? Fie
upon thee !

Is this a weapon for a fool ?

Isbr. Madam, I pray thee pardon us. The fair
have wrested the tongue from us, and we must give
our speeches a tongue of some metal—steel or gold.
And I beseech thee, lady, call me fool no more :
I grow old, and in old age you know what men
become. We are at court, and there it were sin to
call a thing by its right name : therefore call me
a fool no longer, for my wisdom is on the wane,
and I am almost as sententious as the governor.

The Lady. Excellent : wilt thou become court-
confessor ?

Isbr. Ay, if thou wilt begin with thy secrets,
lady. But my fair mistress, and you, noble
brethren, I pray you gather around me. I will
now speak a word in earnest, and hereafter jest
with you no more : for I lay down my profession
of folly. Why should I wear bells to ring the
changes of your follies on ? Doth the besonneted
moon wear bells, she that is the parasite and zany
of the stars, and your queen, ye apes of madness ?
As I live I grow ashamed of the duality of my legs,
for they and the apparel, forked or furbelowed,
upon them constitute humanity ; the brain no
longer ; and I wish I were an honest fellow of four
shins when I look into the note-book of your
absurdities. I will abdicate.

The Lady. Brave! but how dispose of your dominions, most magnanimous zany?

Isbr. My heirs at law are manifold. Yonder minister shall have my jacket; he needs many colours for his deeds. You shall inherit my mantle; for your sins, (be it whispered,) chatter with the teeth for cold; and charity, which should be their great-coat, you have not in the heart.

The Lady. Gramercy: but may I not beg your coxcomb for a friend?

Isbr. The brothers have an equal claim to that crest: they may tilt for it. But now for my crown. () cap and bells, ye eternal emblems, hieroglyphics of man's supreme right in nature; () ye, that only fall on the deserving, while oak, palm, laurel, and bay rankle on *their* foreheads, whose deserts are oft more payable at the other extremity: who shall be honoured with you? Come candidates, the cap and bells are empty.

The Lady. Those you should send to England, for the bad poets and the critics who praise them.

Isbr. Albeit worthy, those merry men cannot this once obtain the prize. I will yield Death the crown of folly. He hath no hair, and in this weather might catch cold and die: besides he has killed the best knight I knew, Sir Wolfram, and deserves it. Let him wear the cap, let him toll the bells; he shall be our new court-fool: and, when the world is old and dead, the thin wit shall find the angel's record of man's works and deeds, and write with a lipless grin on the innocent first page for a title, "Here begins Death's Jest-book."—There, you have my testament: hence-

forth speak solemnly to me, and I will give a measured answer, having relapsed into court-wisdom again.

The Lady. How the wild jester would frighten us ! Come, Siegfried :

Some of us in a corner wait your music,
Your news, and stories. My lord Adalmar,
You must be very weary all this time,
The rest are so delighted. Come along, [*to Siegf.*]
Or else his answer stuns me.

Adalm. Joyous creature !
Whose life's first leaf is hardly yet uncurled.

Athulf. Use your trade's language ; were I
journey-man
To Mars, the glorious butcher, I would say
She's sleek, and sacrificial flowers would look well
On her white front.

Adalm. Now, brother, can you think,
Stern as I am above, that in my depth
There is no cleft wherein such thoughts are hived
As from dear looks and words come back to me,
Storing that honey, love. O ! love I do,
Through every atom of my being.

Athulf. Ay,
So do we young ones all. In winter time
This god of butterflies, this Cupid sleeps,
As they do in their cases ; but May comes ;
With it the bee and he : each spring of mine
He sends me a new arrow, thank the boy.
A week ago he shot me for this year ;
The shaft is in my stomach, and so large
There's scarcely room for dinner.

Adalm. Shall I believe thee,

Or judge mortality by this stout sample
 I screw my mail o'er? Well, it may be so;
 You are an adept in these chamber passions,
 And have a heart that's Cupid's arrow cushion
 Worn out with use. I never knew before
 The meaning of this love. But one has taught me,
 It is a heaven wandering among men,
 The spirit of gone Eden haunting earth.
 Life's joys, death's pangs are viewless from its
 bosom,
 Which they who keep are gods: there's no paradise,
 There is no heaven, no angels, no blessed spirits,
 No souls, or they have no eternity,
 If this be not a part of them.

Athulf.

This in a Court!

Such sort of love might Hercules have felt
 Warm from the Hydra fight, when he had fattened
 On a fresh slain Bucentaur, roasted whole,
 The heart of his pot-belly, till it ticked
 Like a cathedral clock. But in good faith
 Is this the very truth? Then have I found
 My yellow fool. For I am wounded too
 E'en to the quick and inmost, Adalmar.
 So fair a creature! of such charms compact
 As nature stints elsewhere; which you may find
 Under the tender eyelid of a serpent,
 Or in the gurge of a kiss-coloured rose,
 By drops and sparks: but when she moves, you
 see,
 Like water from a crystal overfilled,
 Fresh beauty tremble out of her and lave
 Her fair sides to the ground. Of other women,
 (And we have beauteous in this court of ours,)

I can remember whether nature touched
 Their eye with brown or azure, where a vein
 Runs o'er a sleeping eyelid, like some streak
 In a young blossom ; every grace count up,
 Here the round turn and crevice of the arm,
 There the tress-bunches, or the slender hand
 Seen between harpstrings gathering music from
 them :

But where she is, I'm lost in her abundance,
 And when she leaves me I know nothing more,
 (Like one from whose awakening temples rolls
 The cloudy vision of a god away,)
 Than that she was divine.

Adalm. Fie sir, these are the spiced sighs of a
 heart,
 That bubbles under wine ; utter rhyme-gilding,
 Beneath man's sober use. What do you speak of ?

Athulf. A woman most divine, and that I love
 As you dare never.

Adalm. Boy, a truce with talk.
 Such words are sacred, placed within man's reach
 To be used seldom, solemnly, when speaking
 Of what both God and man might overhear,
 You unabashed.

Athulf. Of what ? What is more worthy
 Than the delight of youth, being so rare,
 Precious, short-lived, and irrecoverable ?

Adalm. When you do mention that adored land,
 Which gives you life, pride, and security,
 And holy rights of freedom ; or in the praise
 Of those great virtues and heroic men,
 That glorify the earth and give it beams,
 Then to be lifted by the like devotion

Would not disgrace God's angels.

Athulf.

Well sir, I

Worship, and swear by them, your native count
And virtues past ; a phantom and a corpse :
Such airy stuff may please you. My desires
Are hot and hungry ; they will have their fill
Of living dalliance, gazes, and lip-touches,
Or eat their master. Now, no more rebuking :
Peace be between us. For why are we brother
Being the creatures of two different gods,
But that we may not be each other's murderers !

Adalm. So be it then ! But mark me, brother

Athulf,

I spoke not from a cold unnatural spirit,
Barren of tenderness. I feel and know
Of woman's dignity ; how it doth merit
Our total being, has all mine this moment :
But they should share with us our level lives :
Moments there are, and one is now at hand,
Too high for them. When all the world is stirr
By some preluding whisper of that trumpet,
Which shall awake the dead, to do great things,
Then the sublimity of my affection,
The very height of my beloved, shows me
How far above her's glory. When you've earned
This knowledge, tell me : I will say, you love
As a man should. *[He raises his hand.]*

Athulf.

But this is somewhat true.

I almost think that I could feel the same
For her. For *her* ? By heaven 'tis Amala,
Amala only, that he so can love.
There ? by her side ? in conference ! at smiles !
Then I am born to be a fratricide.

I feel as I were killing him. Tush, tush ;
A phantom of my passion ! But, if true—
What ? What, my heart ? A strangely-quiet thought,
That will not be pronounced, doth answer me.

THORWALD *comes forward, attended by the
company.*

Thorw. Break up ! The day's of age. Knights
to the lists,
And ladies to look on. We'll break some lances
Before 'tis evening. To your sports, I pray !
I follow quickly. [*He is left alone with the DUKE.*
Pilgrim, now your news :

Whence come you ?

Duke. Straightway from the holy land,
Whose sanctity such floods of human blood,
Unnatural rain for it, will soon wash out.

Thorw. You saw our Duke ?

Duke. I did : but Melveric
Is strangely altered. When we saw him leap,
Shut up in iron, on his burning steed
From Grüssau's threshold, he had fifty years
Upon his head, and bore them straight and upright,
Through dance and feast, and knightly tournament.

Thorw. How ! Is he not the same ? 'Tis but
three years
And a fourth's quarter past. What is the change ?
A silvering of the hair ? a deeper wrinkle
On cheek and forehead ?

Duke. I do not think you'd know him,
Stood he where I do. No. I saw him lying
Beside a fountain on a battle-evening :
The sun was setting over the heaped plain ;

And to my musing fancy his front's furrows,
With light between them, seemed the grated
shadow

Thrown by the ribs of that field's giant, Death ;
'Twixt which the finger of the hour did write
' This is the grave's.'

Thorw. How? Looked he sorrowful?
Knows he the dukedom's state?

Duke (giving letters to Thorwald). Ask these.
He's heard

The tidings that afflict the souls of fathers ;
How these two sons of his unfilially
Have vaulted to the saddle of the people,
And charge against him. How he gained the news,
You must know best : what countermines he digs,
Those letters tell your eyes. He bade me say,
His dukedom is his body, and, he forth,
That may be sleeping, but the touch of wrong,
The murderer's barefoot tread will bring him back
Out of his Eastern visions, ere this earth
Has swung the city's length.

Thorw. I read as much :
He bids me not to move ; no eye to open,
But to sit still and doze, and warm my feet
At their eruption. This security
Is most unlike him. I remember oft,
When the thin harvests shed their withered grain,
And empty poverty yelped sour-mouthed at him,
How he would cloud his majesty of form
With priestly hangings, or the tattered garb
Of the step-seated beggar, and go round
To catch the tavern talk and the street ballad,
And whispers of ancestral prophecies,

Until he knew the very nick of time,
When his heart's arrow would be on the string ;
And, seizing Treason by the arm, would pour
Death back upon him.

Duke. He is wary still,
And has a snake's eye under every grass.
Your business is obedience unto him,
Who is your natal star ; and mine, to worm,
Leaf after leaf, into the secret volume
Of their designs. Already has our slave,
The grape juice, left the side-door of the youngest
Open to me. You think him innocent.
Fire flashes from him ; whether it be such
As treason would consult by, or the coals
Love boils his veins on, shall through this small
crevice,
Through which the vine has thrust its cunning
tendril,
Be looked and listened for.

Thorw. Can I believe it ?
Did not I know him and his spirit's course,
Well as the shape and colour of the sun,
And when it sets and rises ? Is this he ?
No : 'tis the shadow of this pilgrim false,
Who stands up in his height of villany,
Shadowy as a hill, and throws his hues
Of contradiction to the heavenly light,
The stronger as it shines upon him most.
Ho ! pilgrim, I have weighed and found thee
villain.

Are thy knees used to kneeling ? It may chance
That thou wilt change the altar for the block :
Prove thou'rt his messenger.

Duke. I wait your questions.
The very inmost secret of his heart,
Confided to you, challenge from me.

Thorw. First,
A lighter trial. If you come from him,
Tell me what friend he spoke of most.

Duke Of thee.

Thorw. Another yet ;
A knight ?

Duke. There is no living knight his friend.

Thorw. O ill-guessed, palmer ! One, whom
Melveric

Would give his life, all but his virtue for,
Lived he no more, to raise him from the dead.

Duke. Right ; he would give his soul ; Thor-
wald, his soul :—

Friendship is in its depth, and secrets sometimes
Like to a grave.—So loved the Duke that warrior.

Thorw. Enough, his name ; the name ?

Duke. Ay, ay, the name—

Methinks there's nothing in the world but names :
All things are dead ; friendship at least I'll blot
From my vocabulary. The man was called—
The knight—I cannot utter't—the knight's name—
Why dost thou ask me ? I know nothing of him.
I have not seen or heard of him, of—Well,
I'll speak of him to no man more—

Thorw. Tremble then
When thou dost hear of—Wolfram ! thou art pale :
Confess, or to the dungeon—

Duke. Pause ! I am stuffed
With an o'erwhelming spirit : press not thou,
Or I shall burst asunder, and let through

The deluging presence of thy duke. Prepare :
He's near at hand.

Thorw. Forbid it, Providence !
He steps on a plot's spring, whose teeth encircle
The throne and city.

Duke (disrobing). Fear not. On he comes,
Still as a star robed in eclipse, until
The earthy shadow slips away. Who rises ?
I'm changing : now who am I ?

Thorw. Melveric !
Munsterberg, as I live and love thee !

Duke. Hush !
Is there not danger ?

Thorw. Ay : we walk on ice
Over the mouth of Hell : an inch beneath us,
Dragon Rebellion lies ready to wake.
Ha ! and behold him.

Enter ADALMAR.

Adalm. Lord Governor, our games are waiting
for you.

Will you come with me ? Base and muffled
stranger,

What dost thou here ? Away.

Duke Prince Adalmar,
Where shall you see me ? I will come again,
This or the next world. Thou, who carriest
The seeds of a new world, may'st understand me.
Look for me ever. There's no crack without me
In earth and all around it. Governor,
Let all things happen, as they will. Farewell :
Tremble for no one.

Adalm. Hence ! The begging monk

Prates emptily.

Duke. Believe him.

Thorw. Well, lead on ;

Wert thou a king, I would not more obey thee.

[*Exit with* ADALMAR.

Duke. Rebellion, treason, parricidal daggers !
This is the bark of the court dogs, that come
Welcoming home their master. My sons too,
Even my sons ! O not sons, but contracts,
Between my lust and a destroying fiend,
Written in my dearest blood, whose date run out,
They are become death-warrants. Parricide,
And Murder of the heart that loved and nourished,
Be merry, ye rich fiends ! Piety's dead,
And the world left a legacy to you.
Under the green-sod are your coffins packed,
So thick they break each other. The days come
When scarce a lover, for his maiden's hair,
Can pluck a stalk whose rose draws not its hue
Out of a hate-killed heart. Nature's polluted,
There's man in every secret corner of her,
Doing damned wicked deeds. Thou art old, world,
A hoary atheistic murderous star :
I wish that thou would'st die, or could'st be slain,
Hell-hearted bastard of the sun.
O that the twenty coming years were over !
Then should I be at rest, where ruined arches
Shut out the troublesome unghostly day ;
And idlers might be sitting on my tomb,
Telling how I did die. How shall I die ?
Fighting my sons for power ; or of dotage,
Sleeping in purple pressed from filial veins ;
To let my epitaph be, " Here lies he,

Who murdered his two children?" Hence cursed
thought!

I will enquire the purpose of their plot :
There may be good in it, and, if there be,
I'll be a traitor too. [Exit.

SCENE III.

A retired gallery in the ducal castle.

Enter ISBRAND and SIEGFRIED.

Isbr. Now see you how this dragon egg of ours
Swells with its ripening plot? Methinks I hear
Snaky rebellion turning restless in it,
And with its horny jaws scraping away
The shell that hides it. All is ready now :
I hold the latch-string of a new world's wicket ;
One pull and it rolls in. Bid all our friends
Meet in that ruinous church-yard once again,
By moonrise : until then I'll hide myself ;
For these sweet thoughts rise dimpling to my lips,
And break the dark stagnation of my features,
Like sugar melting in a glass of poison.
To-morrow, Siegfried, shalt thou see me sitting
One of the drivers of this racing earth,
With Grissau's reins between my fingers. Ha !
Never since Hell laughed at the church, blood-
drunken
From rack and wheel, has there been joy so mad
As that which stings my marrow now.

Siegfr.

Good cause,

The sun-glance of a coming crown to heat you,
And give your thoughts gay colours in the steam
Of a fermenting brain.

Isbr.

Not alone that.

A sceptre is smooth handling, it is true,
And one grows fat and jolly in a chair
That has a kingdom crouching under it,
With one's name on its collar, like a dog,
To fetch and carry. But the heart I have
Is a strange little snake. He drinks not wine,
When he'd be drunk, but poison : he doth fatten
On bitter hate, not love. And, O that duke !
My life is hate of him ; and, when I tread
His neck into the grave, I shall, methinks,
Fall into ashes with the mighty joy,
Or be transformed into a wingèd star :
That will be all eternal heaven distilled
Down to one thick rich minute. This sounds
madly,

But I am mad when I remember him :
Siegfried, you know not why.

Siegfr.

I never knew

That you had quarrelled.

Isbr.

True : but did you see

My brother's corpse ? There was a wound on't,
Siegfried ;

He died not gently, nor in a ripe age ;
And I'll be sworn it was the duke that did it,
Else he had not remained in that far land,
And sent his knights to us again.

Siegfr.

I thought

He was the duke's close friend.

Isbr.

Close as his blood :

A double-bodied soul they did appear,
Rather than fellow hearts.

Siegfr. I've heard it told
That they did swear and write in their best blood,
And her's they loved the most, that who died first
Should, on death's holidays, revisit him
Who still dwelt in the flesh.

Isbr. O that such bond
Would move the jailor of the grave to open
Life's gate again unto my buried brother,
But half an hour ! Were I buried, like him,
There in the very garrets of death's town,
But six feet under earth, (that's the grave's sky,)
I'd jump up into life. But he's a quiet ghost ;
He walks not in the churchyard after dew,
But gets to his grave betimes, burning no glow-
worms,
Sees that his bones are right, and stints his worms
Most miserly. If you were murdered, Siegfried,
As he was by this duke, should it be so ?

Siegfr. Here speaks again your passion : what
know we
Of death's commandments to his subject-spirits,
Who are as yet the the body's citizens ?
What seas unnavigable, what wild forests,
What castles, and what ramparts there may hedge
His icy frontier ?

Isbr. Tower and roll what may,
There have been goblins bold who have stolen
passports,
Or sailed the sea, or leaped the wall, or flung
The drawbridge down, and travelled back again.
So would my soul have done. But let it be.

At the doom-twilight shall the ducal cut-throat
Wake by a tomb-fellow he little dreamt of.
Methinks I see them rising with mixed bones,
A pair of patch-work angels.

Siegfr. What does this mean?

Isbr. A pretty piece of kidnapping, that's all.
When Melveric's heart's heart, his new-wed wife,
Upon the bed whereon she bore these sons,
Died, as a blossom does whose inmost fruit
Tears it in twain, and in its stead remains
A bitter poison-berry: when she died,
What her soul left was by her husband laid
In the marriage grave, whereto he doth consign
Himself being dead.

Siegfr. Like a true loving mate.
Is not her tomb 'mid the cathedral ruins,
Where we to-night assemble?

Isbr. Say not her's:
A changeling lies there. By black night came I,
And, while a man might change two goblets' liquors,
I laid the lips of their two graves together,
And poured my brother into hers; while she,
Being the lightest, floated and ran over.
Now lies the murdered where the loved should be;
And Melveric the dead shall dream of heaven,
Embracing his damnation. There's revenge.
But hush! here comes one of my dogs, the princes;
To work with you. [Exit SIEGFRIED.

Now for another shape;
For Isbrand is the handle of the chisels
Which Fate, the turner of men's lives, doth use
Upon the wheeling world.

Enter ATHULF.

There is a passion
Lighting his cheek, as red as brother's hate :
If it be so, these pillars shall go down,
Shivering each other, and their ruins be
My step into a dukedom. Doth he speak ?

Athulf. Then all the minutes of my life to come
Are sands of a great desert, into which
I'm banished broken-hearted. Amala,
I must think thee a lovely-faced murderess,
With eyes as dark and poisonous as nightshade ;
Yet no, not so ; if thou hadst murdered me,
It had been charitable. Thou hast slain
The love of thee, that lived in my soul's palace
And made it holy : now 'tis desolate,
And devils of abandonment will haunt it,
And call in Sins to come, and drink with them
Out of my heart. But now farewell, my love ;
For thy rare sake I could have been a man
One story under god. Gone, gone art thou.
Great and voluptuous Sin now seize upon me,
Thou paramour of Hell's fire-crownèd king,
That show'dst the tremulous fairness of thy bosom
In heaven, and so didst ravish the best angels.
Come, pour thy spirit all about my soul,
And let a glory of thy bright desires
Play round about my temples. So may I
Be thy knight and Hell's saint for evermore.
Kiss me with fire : I'm thine.

Isbr.

Doth it run so ?

A bold beginning : we must keep him up to't.

Athulf. Isbrand !

Isbr. My prince.

Athulf. Come to me. Thou'rt a man
I must know more of. There is something in thee,
The deeper one doth venture in thy being,
That drags us on and down. What dost thou lead to?
Art thou a current to some unknown sea
Islanded richly, full of syren songs
And unknown bliss? Art thou the snaky opening
Of a dark cavern, where one may converse
With night's dear spirits? If thou'rt one of these,
Let me descend thee.

Isbr. You put questions to me
In an Egyptian or old magic tongue,
Which I can ill interpret.

Athulf. Passion's hieroglyphics;
Painted upon the minutes by mad thoughts,
Dungeoned in misery. Isbrand, answer me;
Art honest, or a man of many deeds
And many faces to them? Thou'rt a plotter,
A politician. Say, if there should come
A fellow, with his being just abandoned
By old desires and hopes, who would do much,—
And who doth much upon this grave-paved star,
In doing, must sin much,—would quick and straight,
Sword-straight and poison-quick, have done with
doing;

Would you befriend him?

Isbr. I can lend an arm
To good hold purpose. But you know me not,
And I will not be known before my hour.
Why come you here wishing to raise the devil,
And ask me how? Where are your sacrifices?
Eye-water is not his libation, prayers

Reach him not through earth's chinks. Bold deeds
and thoughts,
What men call crimes, are his loved litany ;
And from all such good angels keep us ! Now sir,
What makes you fretful ?

Athulf. I have lost that hope,
For which alone I lived. Henceforth my days
Are purposeless ; there is no reason further
Why I should be, or should let others be ;
No motive more for virtue, for forbearance,
Or anything that's good. The hourly need,
And the base bodily cravings, must be now
The aim of this deserted human engine.
Good may be in this world, but not for me ;
Gentle and noble hearts, but not for me ;
And happiness, and heroism, and glory,
And love, but none for me. Let me then wander
Amid their banquets, funerals, and weddings,
Like one whose living spirit is Death's Angel.

Isbr. What ? You have lost your love and so
turned sour ?

And who has ta'en your chair in Amala's heaven ?

Athulf. My brother, my Cain ; Adalmar.

Isbr. I'll help thee, prince :

When will they marry ?

Athulf. I could not wish him in my rage to die
Sooner : one night I'd give him to dream hell's.
To-morrow, Isbrand.

Isbr. Sudden, by my life.

But, out of the black interval, we'll cast
Something upon the moment of their joy,
Which, should it fail to blot, shall so deform it,
That they must write it further down in time.

Athulf. Let it be crossed with red.

Isbr. Trust but to me :

I'll get you bliss. But I am of a sort
Not given to affections. Sire and mother
And sister I had never, and so feel not
Why sin 'gainst them should count so doubly wicked,
This side o' th' sun. If you would wound your foe,
Get swords that pierce the mind : a bodily slice
Is cured by surgeon's butter : let true hate
Leap the flesh wall, or fling his fiery deeds
Into the soul. So he can marry, Athulf,
And then—

Athulf. Peace, wicked-hearted slave !
Darest thou tempt me ? I called on thee for service,
But thou wouldst set me at a hellish work,
To cut my own damnation out of Lust :
Thou'ldst sell me to the fiend. Thou and thy
master,
That sooty beast the devil, shall be my dogs,
My curs to kick and beat when I would have you.
I will not how, nor follow at his bidding,
For his hell-throne. No : I will have a god
To serve my purpose : Hatred be his name ;
But 'tis a god, divine in wickedness,
Whom I will worship. [Exit.]

Isbr. Then go where Pride and Madness carry
thee ;
And let that feasted fatness pine and shrink,
Till thy ghost's pinched in the tight love-lean body.
I see his life, as in a map of rivers,
Through shadows, over rocks, breaking its way,
Until it meet his brother's, and with that
Wrestle and tumble o'er a perilous rock,

Bare as Death's shoulder : one of them is lost,
 And a dark haunted flood creeps deadlly on
 Into the wailing Styx. Poor Amala !
 A thorny rose thy life is, plucked in the dew,
 And pitilessly woven with these snakes
 Into a garland for the King of the grave. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An apartment in the ducal castle.

The DUKE and THORWALD.

Duke. Let them be married : give to Adalmar
 The sweet society of woman's soul,
 As we impregnate damask swords with odour
 Pressed from young flowers' bosoms, so to sweeten
 And purify war's lightning. For the other,
 Who catches love by eyes, the court has stars,
 That will take up in his tempestuous bosom
 The shining place she leaves.

Thorw. It shall be done :
 The bell, that will ring merrily for their bridal,
 Has but few hours to score first.

Duke. Good. I have seen thou
 Our ripe rebellion's ringleaders. They meet
 By moonrise ; with them I : to-night will be
 Fiends' jubilee, with heaven's spy among them.

What else was't that you asked ?

Thorw. The melancholy lady you brought with you ?

Duke. Thorwald, I fear her's is a broken heart. When first I met her in the Egyptian prison, She was the rosy morning of a woman ; Beauty was rising, but the starry grace Of a calm childhood might be seen in her. But since the death of Wolfram, who fell there, Heaven and one single soul know how, I have not dared to look upon her sorrow.

Thorw. Methinks she's too unearthly beautiful. Old as I am, I cannot look at her, And hear her voice, that touches the heart's core, Without a dread that she will fade o' th' instant. There's too much heaven in her : oft it rises, And, pouring out about the lovely earth, Almost dissolves it. She is tender too ; And melancholy is the sweet pale smile, With which she gently doth reproach her fortune.

Duke. What ladies tend her ?

Thorw. My Amala ; she will not often see One of the others.

Duke. Too much solitude Maintains her in this grief. I will look to't Hereafter ; for the present I've enough. We must not meet again before to-morrow.

Thorw. I may have something to report . . .

Duke. Ho ! Ziba.

Enter ZIBA.

Ziba. Lord of my life !

Duke. I bought this man of Afric from an Arab,

Under the shadow of a pyramid,
For many jewels. He hath skill in language;
And knowledge is in him root, flower, and fruit,
A palm with winged imagination in it,
Whose roots stretch even underneath the grave,
And on them hangs a lamp of magic science
In his soul's deepest mine, where folded thoughts
Lie sleeping on the tombs of magi dead:
So said his master when he parted with him.
I know him skilful, faithful: take him with you;
He's fit for many services.

Thorw.

I'll try him:

Wilt thou be faithful, Moor?

Ziba.

As soul to body.

Thorw. Then follow me. Farewell, my noble
pilgrim. [*Exeunt THORWALD and ZIBA.*]

Duke. It was a fascination, near to madness,
Which held me subjugated to that maiden.
Why do I now so coldly speak of her,
When there is nought between us? O! there is,
A deed as black as the old towers of Hell.
But hence! thou torturing weakness of remorse;
'Tis time when I am dead to think on that:
Yet my sun shines; so courage, heart, cheer up:
Who should be merrier than a secret villain?

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

Another room in the same.

SIBYLLA and AMALA.

Sibyl. I would I were a fairy, Amala,
Or knew some of those winged wizard women,
Then I could bring you a more precious gift.
'Tis a wild graceful flower, whose name I know not;
Call it Sibylla's love, while it doth live;
And let it die that you may contradict it,
And say my love doth not, so bears no fruit.
Take it. I wish that happiness may ever
Flow through your days as sweetly and as still,
As did the beauty and the life to this
Out of its roots.

Amala. Thanks, my kind Sibylla:
To-morrow I will wear it at my wedding,
Since that must be.

Sibyl. Art thou then discontented?
I thought the choice was thine, and Adalmar
A noble warrior worthy of his fortune.

Amala. O yes: brave, honourable is my bride-
groom,
But somewhat cold perhaps. If his wild brother
Had but more constancy and less insolence
In love, he were a man much to my heart.
But, as it is, I must, I will be happy;
And Adalmar deserves that I should love him.
But see how night o'ertakes us. Good rest, dear:
We will no more profane sleep's stillest hour.

Sibyl. Good-night, then.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

A church-yard with the ruins of a spacious gothic cathedral. On the cloister walls the DANCE OF DEATH is painted. On one side the sepulchre of the Dukes with massy carved folding doors. Moonlight.

Enter ISBRAND and SIEGFRIED.

Isbr. Not here? That wolf-howled, witch-prayed,
owl-sung fool,
Fat mother moon hath brought the cats their light
A whole thief's hour, and yet they are not met.
I thought the bread and milky thick-spread lies,
With which I plied them, would have drawn to head
The state's bad humours quickly.

Siegfr. They delay
Until the twilight strollers are gone home.

Isbr. That may be. This is a sweet place me-
thinks:
These arches and their caves, now double-nighted
With heaven's and that creeping darkness, ivy,
Delight me strangely. Ruined churches oft,
As this, are crime's chief haunt, as ruined angels
Straight become fiends. This tomb too tickleth me
With its wild-rose branches. Dost remember,
Siegfried,
About the buried Duchess? In this cradle
I placed the new dead: here the changeling lies.
Siegfr. Are we so near? A frightful theft!
Isbr. Fright! idiot!
Peace; there's a footstep on the pavement.

Enter the DUKE.

Welcome !

I thank you wanderer, for coming first.
They of the town lag still.

Duke. The enterprise,
And you its head, much please me.

Isbr. You are courteous.

Duke. Better : I'm honest. But your ways and
words

Are so familiar to my memory,
That I could almost think we had been friends
Since our now riper and declining lives
Undid their outer leaves.

Isbr. I can remember
No earlier meeting. What need of it? Methinks
We agree well enough : especially
As you have brought bad tidings of the Duke.

Duke. If I had time,
And less disturbed thoughts, I'd search my memory
For what thou'rt like. Now we have other matters
To talk about.

Isbr. And, thank the stingy star-shine,
I see the shades of others of our council.

Enter ADALMAR and other conspirators.

Though late met, well met, friends. Where stay
the rest?

For we're still few here.

Adalm. They are contented
With all the steps proposed, and keep their
chambers

Aloof from the suspecting crowd of eyes,

Which day doth feed with sights for nightly gossip,
Till your hour strikes.

Isbr. That's well to keep at home,
And hide, as doth Heaven's wrath, till the last
minute.

Little's to say. We fall as gently on them,
As the first drops of Noah's world-washing shower
Upon the birds' wings and the leaves. Give each
A copy of this paper : it contains
A quick receipt to make a new creation
In our old dukedom. Here stands he who framed it.

Adalm. The unknown pilgrim ! You have
warrant, *Isbrand*,
For trusting him ?

Isbr. I have.

Adalm. Enough. How are the citizens ?
You feasted them these three days.

Isbr. And have them by the heart for't.
'Neath Grüssau's tiles sleep none, whose deepest
bosom

My fathom hath not measured ; none, whose
thoughts

I have not made a map of. In the depth
And labyrinthine home of the still soul,
Where the seen thing is imaged, and the whisper
Joins the expecting spirit, my spies, which are
Suspicion's creeping words, have stolen in,
And, with their eyed feelers, touched and sounded
The little hiding holes of cunning thought,
And each dark crack in which a reptile purpose
Hangs in its chrysalis unripe for birth.
All of each heart I know.

Duke.

O perilous boast !

Isbr. Thy hand then.

Mario. Art thou leader here?

Isbr. Perchance.

Mario. Then listen, as I listened unto you,
And let my life and story end together,
If it seem good to you. A Roman am I;
A Roman in unroman times: I've slept
At midnight in our Capitolian ruins,
And breathed the ghost of our great ancient world,
Which there doth walk: and among glorious
visions,

That the unquiet tombs sent forth to me,
Learned I the love of freedom. Scipio saw I
Washing the stains of Carthage from his sword,
And his freed poet, playing on his lyre
A melody men's souls did sing unto:
Oak-bound and laurelled heads, each man a
country;

And in the midst, like a sun o'er the sea,
(Each helm in the crowd gilt by a ray from him,)
Bald Julius sitting lonely in his car,
Within the circle of whose laurel wreath
All spirits of the earth and sea were spell-bound.
Down with him to the grave! Down with the god!
Stab, Cassius; Brutus, through him; through
him, all!

Dead.—As he fell there was a tearing sigh:
Earth stood on him; her roots were in his heart;
They fell together. Cæsar and his world
Lie in the Capitol; and Jove lies there,
With all the gods of Rome and of Olympus;
Corpses: and does the eagle batten on them?
No; she is flown: the owl sits in her nest;

The toge is cut for cowls ; and falsehood dozes
 In the chair of freedom, triple-crowned beast,
 King Cerberus. Thence I have come in time
 To see one grave for foul oppression dug,
 Though I may share it.

Isbr.

Nay: thou'rt a bold heart.

Welcome among us.

Mario.

I was guided hither
 By one in white, garlanded like a bride,
 Divinely beautiful, leading me softly;
 And she doth place my hand in thine, once more
 Bidding me guard her honour amongst men;
 And so I will, with death to him that soils it:
 For she is Liberty.

Adalm.

In her name we take thee;
 And for her sake welcome thee brotherly.
 At the right time thou comest to us, dark man,
 Like an eventful unexpected night,
 Which finishes a row of plotting days,
 Fulfilling their designs.

Isbr.

Now then, my fellows,
 No more ; but to our unsuspected homes.
 Good-night to all who rest ; hope to the watchful.
 Stranger, with me.

[To MARIO.

[*Exeunt : manet* DUKE.

Duke. I'm old and desolate. O were I dead
 With thee, my wife ! Oft have I lain by night
 Upon thy grave, and burned with the mad wish
 To raise thee up to life. Thank God, whom then
 I might have thought not pitiful, for lending
 No ear to such a prayer. Far better were I
 Thy grave-fellow, than thou alive with me,
 Amid the fears and perils of the time.

Enter ZIBA.

Who's in the dark there?

Ziba. One of the dark's colour:

Ziba, thy slave.

Duke. Come at a wish, my Arab.

Is Thorwald's house asleep yet?

Ziba. No: his lights still burn.

Duke. Go; fetch a lantern and some working fellows

With spade and pickaxe. Let not Thorwald come.

In good speed do it. [*Exit ZIBA.*

That alone is left me:

I will abandon this ungrateful country,
And leave my dukedom's earth behind me; all,
Save the small urn that holds my dead beloved:
That relic will I save from my wrecked principedom;
Beside it live and die.

Enter THORWALD, ZIBA, and gravediggers.

Thorwald with them!

Old friend, I hoped you were in pleasant sleep:

'Tis a late walking hour.

Thorw.

I came to learn

Whether the slave spoke true. This haunted hour,
What would you with the earth? Dig you for
treasure?

Duke. Ay, I do dig for treasure. To the vault,
Lift up the kneeling marble woman there,
And delve down to the coffin. Ay, for treasure:
The very dross of such a soul and body
Shall stay no longer in this land of hate.

Thorw. Let the past be past,
And Lethe freeze unwept on over it.
What is, be patient with : and, with what shall be,
Silence the body-bursting spirit's yearnings.
Thou say'st that, when she died, that day was spilt
All beauty flesh could hold ; that day went down
An oversouled creation. The time comes
When thou shalt find again thy blessed love,
Pure from all earth, and with the usury
Of her heaven-hoarded charms.

Duke. Is this the silence
That I commanded ? Fool, thou say'st a lesson
Out of some philosophic pedant's book.
I loved no desolate soul : she was a woman,
Whose spirit I knew only through those limbs,
Those tender members thou dost dare despise ;
By whose exhaustless beauty, infinite love,
Trackless expression only, I did learn
That there was aught yet viewless and eternal ;
Since they could come from such alone. Where is
she ?

Where shall I ever see her as she was ?
With the sweet smile, she smiled only on me ;
With those eyes full of thoughts, none else could see ?
Where shall I meet that brow and lip with mine ?
Hence with thy shadows ! But her warm fair body,
Where's that ? There, mouldered to the dust.

Old man,
If thou dost dare to mock my ears again
With thy ridiculous, ghostly consolation,
I'll send thee to the blessings thou dost speak of.

Thorw. For heaven's and her sake restrain this
passion.

Duke. She died. But Death is old and half worn out :

Are there no chinks in't? Could she not come to me?
Ghosts have been seen ; but never in a dream,
After she'd sighed her last, was she the blessing
Of these desiring eyes. All, save my soul,
And that but for her sake, were his who knew
The spell of Endor, and could raise her up.

Thorw. Another time that thought were impious.
Unreasonable longings, such as these,
Fit not your age and reason. In sorrow's rage
Thou dost demand and bargain for a dream,
Which children smile at in their tales.

Ziba. Smile ignorance !
But, sure as men have died strong necromancy
Hath set the clock of time and nature back ;
And made Earth's rooty, ruinous, grave-floored
caverns

Throb with the pangs of birth. Ay, were I ever
Where the accused innocent did pray
Acquittal from dead lips, I would essay
My sires' sepulchral magic.

Duke. Slave, thou tempt'st me
To lay my sword's point to thy throat, and say
"Do it or die thyself."

Thorw. Prithee, come in.
To cherish hopes like these is either madness,
Or a sure cause of it. Come in and sleep :
To-morrow we'll talk further.

Duke. Go in thou.
Sleep blinds no eyes of mine, till I have proved
This slave's temptation.

Thorw. Then I leave you to him.

Good-night again. [Exit THORWALD.

Duke. Good-night, and quiet slumbers.
Now then, thou juggling African, thou shadow,
Think'st thou I will not murder thee this night,
If thou again dare tantalize my soul
With thy accursed hints, thy lying boasts?
Say, shall I stab thee?

Ziba. Then thou murder'st truth.
I spoke of what I'd do.

Duke. You told ghost-lies,
And held me for a fool because I wept.
Now, once more, silence: or to-night I shed
Drops royaller and redder than those tears.

Enter ISBRAND and SIEGFRIED.

Isbr. Pilgrim, not yet abed? Why, ere you've
time
To lay your cloak down, heaven will strip off night.
And show her daily bosom.

Duke. Sir, my eyes
Never did feel less appetite for sleep:
I and my slave intend to watch till morrow.

Isbr. Excellent. You're a fellow of my humour.
I never sleep o' nights: the black sky likes me,
And the soul's solitude, while half mankind
Lie quiet in earth's shade and rehearse death.
Come, let's be merry: I have sent for wine,
And here it comes. [It is brought in.

These mossy stones about us
Will serve for stools, although they have been turrets,
Which scarce aught touched but sunlight, or the
claw
Of the strong-winged eagles, who lived here

And fed on battle-bones. Come sit, sir stranger;
 Sit too, my devil-coloured one; here's room
 Upon my rock. Fill, Siegfried.

Siegfr. Yellow wine,
 And rich, be sure. How like you it?

Duke. Better ne'er wetted lip.

Isbr. Then fill again. Come, hast no song to-
 night,

Siegfried? Nor you, my midnight of a man?
 I'm weary of dumb toping.

Siegfr. Yet you sing not.
 My songs are staler than the cuckoo's tune:
 And you, companions?

Duke. We are quite unused.

Isbr. Then you shall have a ballad of my making.

Siegfr. How? do you rhyme too?

Isbr. Sometimes, in rainy weather.
 Here's what I made one night, while picking poisons
 To make the rats a salad.

Duke. And what's your tune?

Isbr. What is the night-bird's tune, wherewith
 she startles

The bee out of his dream, that turns and kisses
 The inmost of his flower and sleeps again?
 What is the lobster's tune when he is boiling?
 I hate your ballads that are made to come
 Round like a squirrel's cage, and round again.
 We nightingales sing boldly from our hearts:
 So listen to us.

Song by Isbrand.

Squats on a toad-stool under a tree
 A bodiless childfull of life in the gloom,

Crying with frog voice, "What shall I be?
 Poor unborn ghost, for my mother killed me
 Scarcely alive in her wicked womb.

What shall I be? shall I creep to the egg
 That's cracking asunder yonder by Nile,
 And with eighteen toes,
 And a snuff-taking nose,
 Make an Egyptian crocodile?

Sing, 'Catch a mummy by the leg
 And crunch him with an upper jaw,
 Wagging tail and clenching claw;
 Take a bill-full from my craw,
 Neighbour raven, caw, O caw,
 Grunt, my crocky, pretty maw,
 And give a paw.'

"Swine, shall I be you? Thou'rt a dear dog;
 But for a smile, and kiss, and pout,
 I much prefer *your* black-lipped snout,
 Little, gruntless, fairy hog,
 Godson of the hawthorn hedge.

For, when Ringwood snuffs me out,
 And 'gins my tender paunch to grapple,
 Sing, 'Twixt your *anles* visage wedge,
 And roll up like an apple.'

"Serpent Lucifer, how do you do?
 Of your worms and your ~~sakes~~ I'd be one or two;
 For in this dear planet of wool and of leather
 'Tis pleasant to need no shirt, breeches, nor shoe,
 And have arm, leg, and belly together.
 Then aches your head, or are you lazy?
 Sing, 'Round your neck your belly wrap,

Tail-a-top, and make your cap
Any bee and daisy.'

"I'll not be a fool, like the nightingale
Who sits up all midnight without any ale,
Making a noise with his nose ;
Nor a camel, although 'tis a beautiful back ;
Nor a duck, notwithstanding the music of quack,
And the webby, mud-patting toes.
I'll be a new bird with the head of an ass,
Two pigs' feet, two men's feet, and two of a hen ;
Devil-winged ; dragon-bellied ; grave-jawed, be-
cause grass
Is a beard that's soon shaved, and grows seldom
again
Before it is summer ; so cow all the rest ;
The new Dodo is finished. O ! come to my
nest."

Siegfr. A noble hymn to the belly gods indeed :
Would that Pythagoras had heard thee, boy !

Isbr. I fear you flatter : 'tis perhaps a little
Too sweet and tender, but that is the fashion ;
Besides my failing is too much sentiment.
Fill the cups up, and pass them round again ;
I'm not my nightly self yet. There's creation
In these thick yellow drops. By my faith, Siegfried,
A man of meat and water's a thin beast,
But he who sails upon such waves as these
Begins to be a fellow. The old gods
Were only men and wine.

Siegfr. Here's to their memory.
They're dead, poor sinners, all of them but Death,

Who has laughed down Jove's broad, ambrosian
brow,

Furrowed with earthquake frowns : and not a ghost
Haunts the gods' town upon Olympus' peak.

Isbr. Methinks that earth and heaven are grown
bad neighbours,
And have blocked up the common door between
them.

Five hundred years ago had we sat here
So late and lonely, many a jolly ghost
Would have joined company.

Siegfr. To trust in story,
In the old times Death was a feverish sleep,
In which men walked. The other world was cold
And thinly-peopled, so life's emigrants
Came back to mingle with the crowds of earth :
But now great cities are transplanted thither,
Memphis, and Babylon, and either Thebes,
And Priam's towery town with its one beech,
The dead are most and merriest : so be sure
There will be no more haunting, till their towns
Are full to the garret ; then they'll shut their gates,
To keep the living out, and perhaps leave
A dead or two between both kingdoms.

Duke. Ziba ;
Hear'st thou, fantastic mountebank, what's said ?

Ziba. Nay : as I live and shall be one myself,
I can command them hither.

Isbr. Whom ?

Ziba. Departed spirits.

Duke. He who dares think that words of human
speech,
A chalky ring with monstrous figures in it,

Or smoky flames can draw the distant souls
Of those, whose bones and monuments are dust,
Must shudder at the restless, broken death,
Which he himself in age shall fall into.

Isbr. Suppose we four had lived in Cyrus' time,
And had our graves under Egyptian grass,
D'you think, at whistling of a necromant,
I'd leave my wine or subterranean love
To know his bidding? Mummies cannot pull
The breathing to them, when they'd learn the news.

Ziba. Perhaps they do, in sleep, in swoons, in
fevers :

But your belief's not needed.

[*To the Duke*]. You remember
The damsel dark at Mecca, whom we saw
Weeping the death of a pale summer flower,
Which her spear-slain beloved had tossed to her
Gallop into battle?

Duke. Happy one !
Whose eyes could yield a tear to soothe her sorrows.
But what's that to the point ?

Ziba. As those tears fell,
A magic scholar passed ; and, their cause known,
Bade her no longer mourn : he called a bird,
And bade it with its bill select a grain
Out of the gloomy death-bed of the blossom.
The feathery bee obeyed ; and scraped aside
The sand, and dropped the seed into its grave :
And there the old plant lay, still and forgotten,
By its just budding grandsons ; but not long :
For soon the floral necromant brought forth
A wheel of amber, (such may Clotho use
When she spins lives,) and, as he turned and sung,

The mould was cracked and shouldered up ; there
came

A curved stalk, and then two leaves unfurled,
And slow and straight between them there arose,
Ghostily still, again the crowned flower.

Is it not easier to raise a man,
Whose soul strives upward ever, than a plant,
Whose very life stands halfway on death's road,
Asleep and buried half ?

Duke.

This was a cheat :

The herb was born anew out of a seed,
Not raised out of a bony skeleton.
What tree is man the seed of ?

Ziba.

Of a ghost ;

Of his night-coming, tempest-waved phantom :
And even as there is a round dry grain
In a plant's skeleton, which being buried
Can raise the herb's green body up again ;
So is there such in man, a seed-shaped bone,
Aldaharon, called by the Hebrews Luz,
Which, being laid into the ground, will bear
After three thousand years, the grass of flesh,
The bloodily, soul-possessed weed called man.

Isbr. Let's have a trick then, in all haste, I
prithee.

The world's man-crammed ; we want no more of
them :

But show me, if you will, some four-legged ghost ;
Rome's mother, the she-wolf ; or the fat goat
From whose dugs Jove sucked goat-head ; any thing ;
Pig, bullock, goose ; for they have goblins too,
Else ours would have no dinner.

Ziba.

Were you worthy,

With all her towers and mountains !

Ziba.

Listen, lord.

Time was when Death was young and pitiful,
Though callous now by use : and then there dwelt,
In the thin world above, a beauteous Arab,
Unmated yet and boyish. To his couch
At night, which shone so starry through the boughs,
A pale flower-breathed nymph with dewy hair
Would often come, but all her love was silent ;
And ne'er by day-light could he gaze upon her,
For ray by ray, as morning came, she paled,
And like a snow of air dissolv'd i' th' light,
Leaving behind a stalk with lilies hung,
Round which her womanish graces had assembled.
So did the early love-time of his youth
Pass with delight : but when, compelled at length,
He left the wilds and woods for riotous camps
And cities full of men, he saw no more,
Tho' prayed and wept for, his old bed-time vision,
The pale dissolving maiden. He would wander
Sleepless about the waste, benighted fields,
Asking the speechless shadows of his thoughts
" Who shared my couch ? Who was my love ?
Where is she ? "

Thus passing through a grassy burial-ground,
Wherein a new-dug grave gaped wide for food,
" Who was she ? " cried he, and the earthy mouth
Did move its nettle-bearded lips together,
And said " 'Twas I—I, Death : behold our child ! "
The wanderer looked, and on the lap of the pit
A young child slept as at a mother's breast.
He raised it and he reared it. From that infant
My race, the death-begotten, draw their blood :

Our prayer for the diseased works more than
medicine ;

Our blessings oft secure grey hairs and happy
To new-born infants ; and, in case of need,
The dead and gone are re-begotten by us,
And motherlessly born to second life.

Duke. I've heard your tale. Now exorcise : but,
mark !

If thou dost dare to make my heart thy fool,
I'll send thee to thy grave-mouthed grandam, Arab.

Ziba. Wilt thou submit unmurmuring to all evils,
Which this recall to a forgotten being
May cause to thee and thine ?

Duke. With all my soul,
So I may take the good.

Ziba. And art thou ready
To follow, if so be its will, the ghost,
Whom you will re-imbody, to the place
Which it doth now inhabit ?

Duke. My first wish.
Now to your sorcery : and no more conditions,
In hopes I may break off. All ill be mine,
Which shall the world revisit with the being
That lies within.

Ziba. Enough. Upon this scroll
Are written words, which read, even in a whisper,
Would in the air create another star ;
And, more than thunder-tongued storms in the sky,
Make the old world to quake and sweat with fear ;
And, as the chilly damps of her death-swoon
Fall and condense, they to the moon reflect
The forms and colours of the pale old dead.
Laid there among the bones, and left to burn,

With sacred spices, its keen vaporous power
Would draw to life the earliest dead of all,
Swift as the sun doth ravish a dew-drop
Out of a flower. But see, the torch-flame dies:
How shall I light it?

Duke. Here's my useless blood-bond;
These words, that should have waked illumination
Within a corpse's eyes, will make a tinder,
Whose sparks might be of life instead of fire.
Burn it.

Ziba. An incense for thy senses, god of those,
To whom life is as death to us; who were,
Ere our grey ancestors wrote history;
When these our ruined towers were in the rock;
And our great forests, which do feed the sea
With storm-souled fleets, lay in an acorn's cup:
When all was seed that now is dust; our minute
Invisibly far future. Send thy spirit
From plant of the air, and from the air and earth,
And from earth's worms, and roots, again to gather
The dispersed being, 'mid whose bones I place
The words which, spoken, shall destroy death's
kingdom,
And which no voice, but thunder, can pronounce.
Marrow fill bone, and vine-like veins run round
them,

And flesh, thou grass, mown wert thou long ago,—
Now comes the brown dry after-crop. Ho! ghost!
There's thy old heart a-beating, and thy life
Burning on the old hearth. Come home again!

Duke. Hush! Do you hear a noise?

Ziba. It is the sound
Of the ghost's foot on Jacob's ladder-rungs.

Duke. More like the tread upon damp stony steps
Out of a dungeon. Dost thou hear a door
Drop its great bolt and grate upon its hinges?

Ziba. Serpentine Hell! That is thy staircase
echo, [Aside.
And thy jaws' groaning. What betides it?

Duke. Thou human murder-time of night,
What hast thou done?

Ziba. My task : give me to death, if the air has
not
What was the earth's but now. Ho there ! i' th'
vault.

A Voice. Who breaks my death?

Ziba. Draw on thy body, take up thy old limbs,
And then come forth tomb-born.

Duke. One moment's peace !
Let me remember what a grace she had,
Even in her dying hour : her soul set not,
But at its noon Death like a cloud came o'er it,
And now hath passed away. O come to me,
Thou dear returned spirit of my wife ;
And, surely as I clasp thee once again,
Thou shalt not die without me.

Ziba. Ho ! there, Grave,
Is life within thee?

The Voice. Melveric, I am here.

Duke. Did'st hear that whisper? Open, and
let in
The blessing to my eyes, whose subtle breath
Doth penetrate my heart's quick ; let me hear
That dearest name out of those dearest lips.
Who comes back to my heart?

(MANDRAKE runs out of the sepulchre.)

Ziba. Momus of Hell, what's this?

Duke. Is this thy wretched jest, thou villanous fool?

But I will punish thee, by heaven; and thou too

[To MANDRAKE.

Shalt soon be what thou shouldst have better acted.

Mandr. Excuse me: as you have thought proper to call me to the living, I shall take the liberty of remaining alive. If you want to speak to another ghost, of longer standing, look into the old lumber-room of a vault again: some one seems to be putting himself together there. Good-night, gentlemen, for I must travel to Egypt once more.

[Exit.

Duke. Thou disappointed cheat! Was this a fellow,

Whom thou hadst hired to act a spectral part?

Thou sees't how well he does it. But away!

Or I will teach thee better to rehearse it.

Ziba. Death is a hypocrite then, a white dissembler,

Like all that doth seem good! I am put to shame.

[Exit.

Duke. Deceived and disappointed vain desires!

Why laugh I not, and ridicule myself?

'Tis still, and cold, and nothing in the air

But an old grey twilight, or of eve or morn,

I know not which, dim as futurity,

And sad and hoary as the ghostly past,

Fills up the space. Hush! not a wind is there,

Not a cloud sails over the battlements,

Not a bell tolls the hour. Is there an hour?
 Or is not all gone by, which here did hive,
 Of men and their life's ways? Could I but hear
 The ticking of a clock, or some one breathing,
 Or e'en a cricket's chirping, or the grating
 Of the old gates amidst the marble tombs,
 I should be sure that this was still the world.
 Hark! Hark! Doth nothing stir?
 No light, and still no light, besides this ghost
 That mocks the dawn, unaltered? Still no sound?
 No voice of man? No cry of beast? No rustle
 Of any moving creature? And sure I feel
 That I remain the same: no more round blood-
 drops

Roll joyously along my pulseless veins:
 The air I seem to breathe is still the same:
 And the great dreadful thought, that now comes
 o'er me,

Must remain ever as it is, unchanged.—
 This moment doth endure for evermore;
 Eternity hath overshadowed time;
 And I alone am left of all that lived,
 Pent in this narrow, horrible conviction.
 Ha! the dead soon will wake! My Agnes, rise;
 Rise up, my wife! One look, ere Wolfram comes;
 Quick, or it is too late: the murdered hasten:
 My best-beloved, come once to my heart . .
 But ah! who art thou?

*(The gates of the sepulchre fly open and
 discover WOLFRAM.)*

Wolfr. Wolfram, murderer,
 To whose heart thou didst come with horrid
 purpose.

Duke. Lie of my eyes, begone ! Art thou not dead ?

Are not the worms, that ate thy marrow, dead ?
What dost thou here, thou wretched goblin fool ?
Think'st thou, I fear thee ? Thou man-mocking
air,

Thou art not truer than a mirror's image,
Nor half so lasting. Back again to coffin,
Thou baffled idiot spectre, or haunt cradles :
Or stay, and I'll laugh at thee. Guard thyself,
If thou pretendest life.

Wolfr. Is this thin air, that thrusts thy sword
away ?
Flesh, bones, and soul, and blood that thou stol'st
from me,

Upon thy summons, bound by heart-red letters,
Here Wolfram stands : what wouldst thou ?

Duke. What sorcery else,
But that cursed compact, could have made full
Hell

Boil over, and spill thee, thou topmost damned ?
But down again ! I'll see no more of thee.
Hound to thy kennel, to your coffin bones,
Ghost to thy torture !

Wolfr. Thou returnest with me ;
So make no hurry. I will stay awhile
To see how the old world goes, feast and be merry,
And then to work again.

Duke. Darest thou stand there,
Thou shameless vapour, and assert thyself,
While I defy, and question, and deride thee ?
The stars, I see them dying : clearly all
The passage of this night remembrance gives me,

About this time he's busy with his falcons,
And then he takes his meal.

Duke.

I'll wait for him.

[*Exit Attendant.*]

How strange it is that I can live to day ;
Nay look like other men, who have been sleeping
On quiet pillows and not dreamt ! Methinks
The look of the world's a lie, a face made up
O'er graves and fiery depths ; and nothing's true
But what is horrible. If man could see
The perils and diseases that he elbows,
Each day he walks a mile ; which catch at him,
Which fall behind and graze him as he passes ;
Then would he know that Life's a single pilgrim,
Fighting unarmed amongst a thousand soldiers.
It is this infinite invisible
Which we must learn to know, and yet to scorn,
And, from the scorn of that, regard the world
As from the edge of a far star. Now then
I feel me in the thickest of the battle ;
The arrow-shower pours down, swords hew, mines
 open
Their ravenous mouths about me ; it rains death ;
But cheerly I defy the braggart storm,
And set my back against a rock, to fight
Till I am bloodily won.

Enter THORWALD.

Thorw. How? here already?
I'm glad on't, and to see you look so clear
After that idle talk. How did it end?

Duke. Scarcely as I expected.

Thorw.

Dared he conjure?

But surely you have seen no ghost last night :
You seem to have supped well and slept.

Duke. We'd wine,

And some wild singing. Of the necromancy
We'll speak no more. Ha ! Do you see a shadow ?

Thorw. Ay : and the man who casts it.

Duke. Tis true ; my eyes are dim and dull with
watching.

This castle that fell down, and was rebuilt
With the same stones, is the same castle still ;
And so with him.

Enter WOLFRAM.

Thorw. What mean you ?

Duke. Impudent goblin !

Darest thou the day-light ? Dar'st be seen of more
Than me, the guilty ? Vanish ! Though thou'rt
there,

I'll not believe I see thee. Or is this
The work of necromantic Conscience ? Ha !

'Tis nothing but a picture : curtain it.

Strange visions, my good Thorwald, are begotten,
When Sleep o'er shadows waking.

Thorw. Who's the stranger ?

You speak as one familiar.

Duke. Is aught here

Besides ourselves ? I think not.

Thorw. Yet you gaze

Straight on the man.

Duke. A villanous friend of mine ;

Of whom I must speak well, and still permit him
To follow me. So thou'rt yet visible,

Thou grave-breaker ! If thou wilt haunt me thus,

I'll make thee my fool, ghost, my jest and zany.
 'Tis his officious gratitude that pains me :
 The carcase owes to me its ruinous life,
 (Between whose broken walls and hideous arches
 You see the other world's grey spectral light ;)
 Therefore he clings to me so ivily.
 Now, goblin, lie about it. 'Tis in truth
 A faithful slave.

Wolfr. If I had come unsummoned,
 If I had burst into your sunny world,
 And stolen visibility and birth
 Against thy prayers, thus shouldst thou speak to me :
 But thou hast forced me up, remember that.
 I am no fiend, no foe ; then let me hear
 These stern and tyrannous rebukes no more.
 Wilt thou be with the born, that have not died ?
 I vanish : now a short farewell. I fade ;
 The air doth melt me, and, my form being gone,
 I'm all thou see'st not. [*He disappears.*]

Duke. Dissolved like snow in water ! Be my cloud,
 My breath, and fellow soul, I can bear all,
 As long as thou art viewless to these others.
 Now there are two of us. How stands the bridal ?

Thorw. This evening 'twill be held.

Duke. Good ; and our plot
 Leaps on your pleasure's lap ; here comes my gang ;
 Away with you. [*Exit THORWALD.*]

I do begin to feel
 As if I were a ghost among the men,
 As all, whom I loved, are ; for their affections
 Hang on things new, young, and unknown to me :
 And that I am is but the obstinate will
 Of this my hostile body.

Enter ISBRAND, ADALMAR, and SIEGFRIED.

Isbr. Come, let's be doing: we have talked
whole nights

Of what an instant, with one flash of action,
Should have performed; you wise and speaking
people

Need some one, with a hatchet-stroke, to free
The Pallas of your Jove-like headaches.

Duke.

Patience:

Fledging comes after hatching. One day more:
This evening brings the wedding of the prince,
And with it feasts and maskings. In mid bowls
And giddy dances let us fall upon them.

Siegfr. Well thought: our enemies will be as-
sembled.

Isbr. I like to see Ruin at dinner-time,
Firing his cannons with the match they lit
For the buck-roasting faggots. But what say you
To what concerns you most? [*to Adalmar.*

Adalm.

That I am ready

To hang my hopeful crown of happiness
Upon the temple of the public good.

Isbr. Of that no need. Your wedding shall be
finished;

Or left, like a full goblet yet untasted,
To be drunk up with greater thirst from toil.
I'll wed too when I've time. My honest pilgrim,
The melancholy lady, you brought with you,
Looks on me with an eye of much content:
I have sent some rhymed love-letters unto her,
In my best style. D' you think we're well matched?

Adalm. How? Would you prop the peach upon
the upas?

Isbr. True: I am rough, a surly bellowing storm;
 But fallen, never tear did hang more tender
 Upon the eye-lash of a love-lorn girl,
 Or any Frenchman's long, frost-bitten nose,
 Than in the rosecup of that lady's life
 I shall be trembling. Pilgrim, plead for me
 With a tongue love-oiled.

Duke. Win her, sir, and wear her.
 But you and she are scarcely for one world.

Isbr. Enough; I'll wed her. Siegfried, come
 with me;
 We'll talk about it in the rainy weather.
 Pilgrim, anon I find you in the ruins,
 Where we had wine last night.

[*Exit with SIEGFRIED.*]

Adalm. Would that it all were over, and well
 over!

Suspicious flash upon me here and there:
 But we're in the mid ocean without compass,
 Winds wild, and billows rolling us away:
 Onwards with hope!

Duke. Of what? Youth, is it possible
 That thou art toiling here for liberty,
 And others' welfare, and such virtuous shadows
 As philosophic fools and beggars raise
 Out of the world that's gone? Thou'lt sell thy
 birthright
 For incense praise, less tickling to the sense
 Than Esau's pottage steam?

Adalm. No, not for these,
 Fame's breath and praise, its shadow. 'Tis my
 humour
 To do what's right and good.

Duke.

Thou'rt a strange prince.

Why all the world, except some fifty lean ones,
 Would, in your place and at your ardent years,
 Seek the delight that lies in woman's limbs
 And mountain-covering grapes. What's to be royal,
 Unless you pick those girls, whose cheeks you
 fancy,

As one would cowslips? And see hills and valleys
 Mantled in autumn with the snaky plant,
 Whose juice is the right madness, the best godship?
 Have men, and beasts, and woods, with flower and
 fruit

From all the earth, one's slaves; bid the worm eat
 Your next year's purple from the mulberry leaf,
 The tiger shed his skin to line your car,
 And men die, thousands in a day, for glory?
 Such things should kings bid from their solitude
 Upon the top of Man. Justice and Good,
 All penniless, base, earthy kind of fellows,
 So low, one wonders they were not born dogs,
 Can do as well, alas!

Adalm.

There's cunning in thee.

A year ago this doctrine might have pleased me:
 But since, I have remembered, in my childhood
 My teachers told me that I was immortal,
 And had within me something like a god;
 Now, by believing firmly in that promise,
 I do enjoy a part of its fulfilment,
 And, antedating my eternity,
 Act as I were immortal.

*Duke.*Think of *now*.

This Hope and Memory are wild horses, tearing
 The precious *now* to pieces. Grasp and use

The breath within you ; for you know not, whether
That wind about the trees brings you one more.
Thus far yourself. But tell me, hath no other
A right, which you would injure ? Is this sceptre,
Which you would stamp to dust and let each varlet
Pick out his grain of power ; this great spirit,
This store of mighty men's concentrate souls,
Which kept your fathers in god's breath, and you
Would waste in the wide, smoky, pestilent air
For every dog to snuff in ; is this royalty
Your own ? O ! when you were a boy, young prince,
I would have laid my heart upon your spirit :
Now both are broken.

Adalm.

Father ?

Duke.

Yes, my son :

We'll live to be most proud of those two names.

Go on thy way : I follow and o'erlook.

This pilgrim's shape will hang about and guard thee,

Being but the shadow of my sunniness,

Looking in patience through a cloudy time.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *A garden.*

SIBYLLA and ATHULF.

Athulf. From me no comfort. O you specious
creatures,

So poisonous to the eye ! Go ! you sow madness :

And one of you, although I cannot curse her,

Will make my grave a murderer's. I'll do nought ;

But rather drink and revel at your bridal.

And why not Isbrand? Many such a serpent
Doth lick heaven's dew out of as sweet a flower.
Wed, wed! I'll not prevent it.

Sibyl. I beseech thee,
If there be any tie of love between thee
And her who is thy brother's.

Athulf. Curse the word!
And trebly curse the deed that made us brothers!
O that I had been born the man I hate!
Any, at least, but one. Then—sleep my soul;
And walk not in thy sleep to do the act,
Which thou must ever dream of. My fair lady,
I would not be the reason of one tear
Upon thy bosom, if the times were other;
If women were not women. When the world
Turns round the other way, and doing Cain-like
Passes as merrily as doing Eve-like,
Then I'll be pitiful. Let go my hand;
It is a mischievous limb, and may run wild,
Doing the thing its master would not. [*Exit.*]

Sibyl. Then no one hears me. O! the world's
too loud,
With trade and battle, for my feeble cry
To rouse the living. The invisible
Hears best what is unspoken; and my thoughts
Have long been calling comfort from the grave.

WOLFRAM suddenly appears, in the garment of a
monk.

Wolfr. Lady, you called me.

Sibyl. I?

Wolfr. The word was *Comfort*:
A name by which the master, whose I am,

Is named by many wise and many wretched.
Will you with me to the place where sighs are not ;
A shore of blessing, which disease doth beat
Sea-like, and dashes those whom he would wreck
Into the arms of Peace? But ah ! what say I?
You're young and must be merry in the world ;
Have friends to envy, lovers to betray you ;
And feed young children with the blood of your
heart,
Till they have sucked up strength enough to
break it.

Poor woman ! Art thou nothing but the straw
Bearing a heavy poison, and, that shed,
Cut down to be stamped on? But thou'rt i' th'
blade ;

The green and milky sun-deceivèd grass :
So stand till the scythe comes, take shine and
shower,

And the wind fell you gently.

Sibyl.

Do not go.

Speak as at first you did ; there was in the words
A mystery and music, which did thaw
The hard old rocky world into a flood,
Whereon a swan-drawn boat seemed at my feet
Rocking on its blue billows ; and I heard
Harmonies, and breathed odours from an isle,
Whose flowers cast tremulous shadows in the day
Of an immortal sun, and crowd the banks
Whereon immortal human kind doth couch.
This I have dreamt before : your speech recalled it.
So speak to soothe me once again.

Wolfr. (aside)

Snake Death,

Sweet as the cowslip's honey is thy whisper :

O let this dove escape thee ! I'll not plead,
 I will not be thy suitor to this innocent :
 Open thy craggy jaws ; speak, coffin-tongued,
 Persuasions through the dancing of the yew-bough
 And the crow's nest upon it. (*Aloud*) Lady fair,
 Listen not to me, look not on me more.

I have a fascination in my words,
 A magnet in my look, which drags you downwards,
 From hope and life. You set your eyes upon me,
 And think I stand upon this earth beside you :
 Alas ! I am upon a jutting stone,
 Which crumbles down the steep of an abyss ;
 And you, above me far, grow wild and giddy :
 Leave me, or you must fall into the deep.

Sibyl. I leave thee never, nor thou me. O no !
 You know not what a heart you spurn away ;
 How good it might be, if love cherished it ;
 And how deserted 'tis ; ah ! so deserted,
 That I have often wished a ghost would come,
 Whose love might haunt it. Turn not thou, the
 last.

Thou see'st I'm young : how happy might I be !
 And yet I only wish these tears I shed
 Were raining on my grave. If thou'lt not love me,
 Then do me the next office ; show me only
 The shortest path to solitary death.

Wolfr. You're moved to wildness, maiden.
 Beg not of me.

I can grant nothing good : quiet thyself,
 And seek heaven's help. Farewell.

Sibyl. Wilt thou leave me ?
 Unpitying, aye unmoved in cheek and heart,
 Stern, selfish mortal ? Hast thou heard my prayer ;

Hast seen me weep ; hast seen my limbs to quiver,
Like a storm-shaken tree over its roots ?
Art thou alive, and canst thou see this wretch,
Without a care ?

Wolfr. Thou see'st I am unmoved :
Infer the truth.

Sibyl. Thy soul indeed is dead.

Wolfr. My soul, my soul ! O that it were not
now

The semblance of a garb it hath cast off ;
O that it was disrobed of these mock limbs,
Shed by a rocky birth unnaturally,
Long after their decease and burial !
O woe that I must speak ! for she, who hears,
Is marked for no more breathing. There are
histories

Of women, nature's bounties, who disdained
The mortal love of the embodied man,
And sought the solitude which spirits cast
Around their darksome presence. These have
loved,
Wooded, wedded, and brought home their moon-
struck brides

Unto the world-sanded eternity.
Hast faith in such reports ?

Sibyl. So lonely am I,
That I dare wish to prove them true.

Wolfr. Dar'st die ?
A grave-deep question. Answer it religiously.

Sibyl. With him I loved, I dared.

Wolfr. With me and for me.
I am a ghost. Tremble not ; fear not me.
The dead are ever good and innocent,

And love the living. They are cheerful creatures
 And quiet as the sunbeams, and most like,
 In grace and patient love and spotless beauty,
 The new-born of mankind. 'Tis better too
 To die, as thou art, young, in the first grace
 And full of beauty, and so be remembered
 As one chosen from the earth to be an angel ;
 Not left to droop and wither, and be borne
 Down by the breath of time. Come then, Sibylla
 For I am Wolfram !

Sibyl. Thou art come to fetch me
 It is indeed a proof of boundless love,
 That thou hadst need of me even in thy bliss.
 I go with thee. O Death ! I am thy friend,
 I struggle not with thee, I love thy state :
 Thou canst be sweet and gentle, be so now ;
 And let me pass praying away into thee,
 As twilight still does into starry night.

[*The scene closes.*]

Voices in the air.

As sudden thunder
 Pierces night ;
 As magic wonder,
 Wild affright,
 Rives asunder
 Men's delight :
 Our ghost, our corpse ; and we
 Rise to be.

As flies the lizard
 Serpent fell ;
 As goblin vizard,
 At the spell

Of the wizard,
Sinks to hell :
Our life, our laugh, our lay
Pass away.

As wake the morning
Trumpets bright ;
As snow-drop, scorning
Winter's might,
Rises warning
Like a sprite :
The buried, dead, and slain
Rise again.

SCENE III.

A garden, under the windows of Amala's apartment.

ATHULF.

Athulf. Once more I'll see thee, love, speak to
thee, hear thee ;
And then my soul shall cut itself a door
Out of this planet. I've been wild and heartless,
Laughed at the feasts where Love had never place,
And pledged my light faith to a hundred women,
Forgotten all next day. A worthless life,
A life ridiculous ! Day after day,
Folly on folly ! But I'll not repent.
Remorse and weeping shall not be my virtues :
Let fools do both, and, having had their evil,
And tickled their young hearts with the sweet sins

* And made prophetic? The past is pale to me ;
But I do see my future plain of life,
Full of rejoicings and of harvest-dances,
Clearly, it is so sunny. A year hence
I'll laugh at you for this, until you weep.
Good-night, sweet fear.

Iridesm. Take this flower from me,
(A white rose, fitting for a wedding-gift,)
And lay it on your pillow. Pray to live
So fair and innocently ; pray to die,
Leaf after leaf, so softly. [Exit.

Amala. — Now to my chamber ; yet an hour or
two,

In which years must be sown.

Athulf. Stay Amala ;
An old acquaintance brings a greeting to you,
Upon your wedding night.

Amala. His brother Athulf ! What can he do
here ?

I fear the man.

Athulf. Dost love him ?

Amala. That were cause
Indeed to fear him. Leave me, leave me, sir :
It is too late. We cannot be together
For any good.

Athulf. This once we can. O Amala,
Had I been in my young days taught the truth,
And brought up with the kindness and affection
Of a good man ! I was not myself evil,
But out of youth and ignorance did much wrong.
Had I received lessons in thought and nature,
We might have been together, but not thus.
How then ? Did you not love me long ago ?

More, O much more than him? Yes, Amala,
 You would have been mine now. A life with thee,
 Heavenly delight and virtue ever with us !
 I've lost it, trod on it, and crush'd it. Woe !
 O bitter woe is me !

Amala. Athulf, why make me
 Rue the inevitable? Prithee leave me.

Athulf. Thee bye and bye : and all that is not
 thee.

Thee, my all, that I've forfeited I'll leave,
 And the world's all, my nothing.

Amala. Nay ; despond not.
 Thou'lt be a merry, happy man some day,
 And list to this as to a tale of some one
 You had forgotten.

Athulf. Now no need of comfort :
 I'm somehow glad that it did thus fall out.
 Then had I lived too softly ; in these woes
 I can stand up, and show myself a man.
 I do not think that I shall live an hour.
 Wilt pardon me for that my earlier deeds
 Have caused to thee of sorrow? Amala,
 Pity me, pardon me, bless me in this hour ;
 In this my death, in this your bridal, hour.
 Pity me, sweet.

Amala. Both thee and me : no more !

Athulf. Forgive !

Amala. With all my soul. God bless thee, my
 dear Athulf.

Athulf. Kiss I thy hand? O much more fervently
 Now, in my grief, than heretofore in love.
 Farewell, go ; look not back again upon me.
 In silence go. [Exit AMALA.

She having left my eyes,
 There's nothing in the world, to look on which
 I'd live a moment longer. Therefore come,
 Thou sacrament of death : Eternity,
 I pledge thee thus. [*He drinks from a pial.*]

How cold and sweet ! It seems
 As if the earth already began, shaking,
 To sink beneath me. O ye dead, come near ;
 Why see I you not yet ? Come, crowd about me ;
 Under the arch of this triumphal hour,
 Welcome me ; I am one of you, and one
 That, out of love for you, have forced the doors
 Of the stale world.

Enter ADALMAR.

Adalm. I'm wearied to the core ; where's Amala ?
 Ha ! Near her chambers ! Who ?

Athulf. Ask that to-morrow
 Of the marble, Adalmar. Come hither to me.
 We must be friends : I'm dying.

Adalm. How ?

Athulf. The cup,
 I've drank myself immortal.

Adalm. You are poisoned ?

Athulf. I am blessed, Adalmar. I've done't myself.

'Tis nearly passed, for I begin to hear
 Strange but sweet sounds, and the loud rocky
 dashing
 Of waves, where time into Eternity
 Falls over ruined worlds. The wind is fair,
 The boat is in the bay,
 And the fair mermaid pilot calls away.

Adalm. Self poisoned?

Athulf. Ay : a philosophic deed.
Go and be happy.

Adalm. God ! What hast thou done ?

Athulf. Justice upon myself.

Adalm. No. Thou hast stolen
The right of the deserving good old man
To rest, his cheerful labour being done.
Thou hast been wicked ; caused much misery ;
Dishonoured maidens ; broken fathers' hearts ;
Maddened some ; made others wicked as thyself ;
And darest thou die, leaving a world behind thee
That groans of thee to heaven ?

Athulf. If I thought so—
Terrible would it be : then I've both killed
And damned myself. There's justice !

Adalm. Thou should'st have lived ;
Devoting every minute to the work
Of useful, penitent amendment : then,
After long years, you might have knelt to Fate,
And ta'en her blow not fearing. Wretch, thou diest
not,
But goest living into hell.

Athulf. It is too true :
I am deserted by those turbulent joys.
The fiend had made me death-drunk. Here I'll
lie,

And die most wretchedly, accursed, unpitied
Of all, most hated by myself. O God,
If thou could'st but repeal this fatal hour,
And let me live, how day and night I'd toil
For all things to atone ! Must I wish vainly ?
My brother, is there any way to live ?

Adalm. Forthee, alas! in this world there is none.
Think not upon't.

Athulf. Thou liest: there must be:
Thou know'st it, and dost keep it secret from me,
Letting me die for hate and jealousy.
O that I had not been so pious a fool,
But killed thee, 'stead of me, and had thy wife!
I should be at the banquet, drinking to her,
Kissing her lip, in her eye smiling. . .

Peace!

Thou see'st I'm growing mad: now leave me here.
Accursed as I am, alone to die.

Adalm. Wretched, yet not despised, farewell
my brother.

Athulf. O Arab, Arab! Thou dost sell true drugs.
Brother, my soul is very weary now:
Speak comfortably to me.

Adalm. From the Arab,
From Ziba, had'st the poison?

Athulf. Ay. 'Twas good:
An honest villain is he.

Adalm. Hold, sweet brother,
A little longer hold in hope on life;
But a few minutes more. I seek the sorcerer,
And he shall cure thee with some wondrous drug.
He can, and shall perform it: rest thee quiet:
Hope or revenge I'll bring thee. [*Exit.*]

Athulf. Dare I hope?
O no: methinks it is not so unlovely,
This calm unconscious state, this breathless peace,
Which all, but troublesome and riotous man,
Assume without resistance. Here I'll lay me,
And let life fall from off me tranquilly.

*Enter singers and musicians led by SIEGFRIED ;
they play under the windows of Amala's apartment,
and sing.*

Song.

By female voices.

We have bathed, where none have seen us,
In the lake and in the fountain,
Underneath the charmed statue
Of the timid, bending Venus,
When the water-nymphs were counting
In the waves the stars of night,
And those maidens started at you,
Your limbs shone through so soft and bright.
But no secrets dare we tell,
For thy slaves unlace thee,
And he, who shall embrace thee,
Waits to try thy beauty's spell.

By male voices.

We have crowned thee queen of women,
Since love's love, the rose, hath kept her
Court within thy lips and blushes,
And thine eye, in beauty swimming,
Kissing, we rendered up the sceptre,
At whose touch the startled soul
Like an ocean bounds and gushes,
And spirits bend at thy controul.
But no secrets dare we tell,
For thy slaves unlace thee,
And he, who shall embrace thee,
Is at hand, and so farewell.

Athulf. Shame on you! Do you sing their
bridal song
Ere I have closed mine eyes? Who's there among you
That dare to be enamoured of a maid
So far above you, ye poor rhyming knaves?
Ha! there begins another.

Song by Siegfried.

Lady, was it fair of thee
To seem so passing fair to me?
Not every star to every eye
Is fair; and why
Art thou another's share?
Did thine eyes shed brighter glances,
Thine unkindled bosom heave more fair,
To his than to my fancies?
But I'll forgive thee still;
Thou'rt fair without thy will.
So be: but never know,
That 'tis the hue of woe.

Lady, was it fair of thee
To be so gentle still to me?
Not every lip to every eye
Should let smiles fly.
Why didst thou never frown,
To frighten from my pillow
Love's head, round which Hope wove a crown,
And saw not 'twas of willow?
But I'll forgive thee still;
Thou knew'st not smiles could kill.
Smile on: but never know,
I die, nor of what woe.

Athulf. Ha! Ha! That fellow moves my spleen :
 A disappointed and contented lover.
 Methinks he's above fifty by his voice :
 If not, he should be whipped about the town,
 For vending such tame doctrine in love-verses.
 Up to the window, carry off the bride,
 And away on horseback, squeaker !

Siegfr. Peace, thou bold drunken fellow that
 liest there !—

Leave him to sleep his folly out, good fellows.

[Exit with musicians.]

Athulf. Well said : I do deserve it. I lie here
 A thousand-fold fool, dying ridiculously
 Because I could not have the girl I fancied.
 Well, they are wedded ; how long now will last
 Affection or content ? Besides 'twere possible
 He might have quaffed a like draught. But 'tis
 done :

Villanous idiot that I am to think on't.
 She willed it so. Then Amala, be fearless :
 Wait but a little longer in thy chamber,
 And he will be with thee whom thou hast chosen :
 Or, if it make thee pastime, listen sweet one,
 And I will sing to thee, here in the moonlight,
 Thy bridal song and my own dirge in one.

He sings.

A cypress-bough, and a rose-wreath sweet,
 A wedding-robe, and a winding-sheet,
 A bridal-bed and a bier.
 Thine be the kisses, maid,
 And smiling Love's alarms ;
 And thou, pale youth, be laid

In the grave's cold arms.
Each in his own charms,
Death and Hymen both are here ;
So up with scythe and torch,
And to the old church porch,
While all the bells ring clear :
And rosy, rosy the bed shall bloom,
And earthy, earthy heap up the tomb.

Now tremble dimples on your cheek,
Sweet be your lips to taste and speak,
For he who kisses is near :
By her the bridegod fair,
In youthful power and force ;
By him the grizard bare,
Pale knight on a pale horse,
To woo him to a corse.
Death and Hymen both are here ;
So up with scythe and torch,
And to the old church porch,
While all the bells ring clear :
And rosy, rosy the bed shall bloom,
And earthy, earthy heap up the tomb.

Athulf. Now we'll lie down and wait for our
two summoners ;
Each patiently at least.

Enter AMALA.

O thou kind girl,
Art thou again there ? Come and lay thine hand
In mine ; and speak again thy soft way to me.

Amala. Thy voice is fainter, *Athulf* : why sang'st
thou ?

Athulf. It was my farewell: now I'll sing no more;

Nor speak a great deal after this. 'Tis well
You weep not. If you had esteemed me much,
It were a horrible mistake of mine.

Wilt close my eyes when I am dead, sweet maid?

Amala. O Athulf, thou might'st still have lived.

Athulf. What boots it,

And thou not mine, nor even loving me?

But that makes dying very sad to me.

Yet even thy pity is worth much.

Amala. O no;

I pity not alone, but I am wretched,—

Love thee and ever did most fervently,

Still hoping thou would'st turn and merit it.

But now—O God! if life were possible to thee,

I'd be thy friend for ever.

Athulf. O thou art full of blessings!

Thou lovest me, Amala: one kiss, but one;

It is not much to grant a dying man.

Amala. I am thy brother's bride, forget not that;

And never but to this, thy dying ear,

I had I confessed so much in such an hour.

But this be too forgiven. Now farewell.

'Twere not amiss if I should die to night:

Athulf, my love, my only love, farewell.

Athulf. Yet one more minute. If we meet
hereafter,

Wilt thou be mine? I have the right to thee;

And, if thou promise, I will let him live

This life, unenvied, with thee.

Amala.

I will, Athulf:

Our bliss there will be greater for the sorrow

We now in parting feel.

Athulf. I go, to wait thee. [*Exit AMALA.*
Farewell, my bliss ! She loves me with her soul,
And I might have enjoyed her, were he fallen.
Ha ! ha ! and I am dying like a rat,
And he shall drink his wine, twenty years hence,
Beside his cherished wife, and speak of me
With a compassionate smile ! Come, Madness,
come,
For death is loitering still.

Enter ADALMAR and ZIBA.

Adalm. An antidote !
Restore him whom thy poisons have laid low,
If thou wilt not sup with thy fellow fiends
In hell to-night.

Ziba. I pray thee strike me not.
It was his choice ; and why should he be breathing
Against his will ?

Athulf. Ziba, I need not perish.
Now my intents are changed : so, if thou canst,
Dispense me life again.

Adalm. Listen to him, slave,
And once be a preserver.

Ziba. Let him rise.
Why, think you that I'd deal a benefit,
So precious to the noble as is death,
To such a pampered darling of delight
As he that shivers there ? O, not for him,
Blooms my dark Nightshade, nor doth Hemlock
brew

Murder for cups within her cavernous root.
Not for him is the metal blessed to kill,

Nor lets the poppy her leaves fall for him.
 To heroes such are sacred. He may live,
 As long as 'tis the Gout and Dropsy's pleasure.
 He wished to play at suicide, and swallowed
 A draught, that may depress and shake his powers
 Until he sleeps awhile; then all is o'er.
 And so good night, my princes. [Exit.]

Adalm. Dost thou hear?

Athulf. Victory! victory! I *do* hear; and Fate
 hears,

And plays with Life for one of our two souls,
 With dice made of death's bones. But shall I do't?
 O Heaven! it is a fearful thing to be so saved!

Adalm. Now, brother, thou'lt be happy.

Athulf. With thy wife!

I tell thee, hapless brother, on my soul,
 Now that I live, I *will* live; I alone;
 And Amala alone shall be my love.
 There's no more room for you, since you have
 chosen

The woman and the power which I covet.
 Out of thy bridal bed, out of thy throne!
 Away to Abel's grave. [Stabs ADALMAR.]

Adalm. Thou murderous traitor!

I was thy brother. [Dies.]

Athulf (after a pause). How long a time it is
 since I was here!

And yet I know not whether I have slept,
 Or wandered through a dreary cavernous forest,
 Struggling with monsters. 'Tis a quiet place,
 And one inviting strangely to deep rest.
 I have forgotten something; my whole life
 Seems to have vanished from me to this hour.

There was a foe whom I should guard against ;
Who is he ?

Amala (from her window). Adalmar !

Athulf (in a low voice). Hush ! hush ! I come
to thee.

Let me but see if he be dead : speak gently,
His jealous ghost still hears.

Amala.

So, it is over

With that poor troubled heart ! O then to-night
Leave me alone to weep.

Athulf.

As thou wilt, lady.

I'm stunned with what has happened. He is dead.

Amala. O night of sorrow ! Bear him from the
threshold.

None of my servants must know where and why
He sought his grave. Remove him. O poor
Athulf,

Why did'st thou it ? I'll to my bed and mourn.

[*Retires.*]

Athulf. Hear'st thou, corpse, how I play thy
part ? Thus had he

Pitied me in fraternal charity,

And I lain there so helpless. Precious cup,

A few drops more of thy somniferous balm,

To keep out spectres from my dreams to-night :

My eyelids thirst for slumber. But what's this,

That chills my blood and darkens so my eyes ?

What's going on in my heart and in my brain,

My bones, my life, all over me, all through me ?

It cannot last. No longer shall I be

What I am now. O I am changing, changing,

Dreadfully changing ! Even here and now

A transformation will o'ertake me. Hark !

It is God's sentence muttered over me.
I am unsouled, dishumanized, uncreated;
My passions swell and grow like brutes conceived;
My feet are fixing roots, and every limb
Is billowy and gigantic, till I seem
A wild, old, wicked mountain in the air:
And the abhorred conscience of this murder,
It will grow up a lion, all alone,
A mighty-maned, grave-mouthèd prodigy,
And lair him in my caves: and other thoughts,
Some will be snakes, and bears, and savage
wolves,

And when I lie tremendous in the desert,
Or abandoned sea, murderers and idiot men
Will come to live upon my rugged sides,
Die, and be buried in me. Now it comes;
I break, and magnify, and lose my form.
And yet I shall be taken for a man,
And never be discovered till I die.
Terrible, terrible: damned before my time,
In secret! 'Tis a dread, o'erpowering phantom.

*[He lies down by the body and sleeps: the
scene closes.]*

SCENE IV.

A large hall in the ducal castle. Through the windows in the background appears the illuminated city.

Enter ISBRAND and SIEGFRIED.

Isbr. By my grave, Siegfried, 'tis a wedding-night.

The wish, that I have courted from my boyhood,
Comes blooming, crowned, to my embrace. Mc-
 thinks,

The spirit of the city is right lovely ;
And she will leave her rocky body sleeping,
To-night, to be my queenly paramour.

Has it gone twelve ?

Siegfr. This half hour. Here I've set,
A little clock, that you may mark the time.

Isbr. Its hand divides the hour. Are our guards
 here,
About the castle ?

Siegfr. You've a thousand swordsmen,
Strong and true soldiers, at the stroke of one.

Isbr. One's a good hour ; a ghostly hour. To-
 night

The ghost of a dead planet shall walk through,
And shake the pillars of this dukedom down.
The princes both are occupied and lodged
Far from us : that is well ; they will hear little.
Go once more round, to the towers and battle-
 ments :

The bell, that strikes, says to our hearts 'Be one ;'
 And, with one motion of a hundred arms,
 Be the beacons fired, the alarums rung,
 And tryants slain ! Be busy.

Siegfr.

I am with them.

[*Exit.*

Isbr. Mine is the hour it strikes ; my first of life.
 To-morrow, with what pity and contempt,
 Shall I look back new-born upon myself !

Enter a Servant.

What now ?

Servant. The banquet's ready.

Isbr.

Let it wait awhile :

The wedding is not ended. That shall be
 No common banquet : none sit there, but souls
 That have outlived a lower state of being.
 Summon the guests. [*Exit Servant.*

Some shall have bitter cups,
 The honest shall be banished from the board,
 And the knaves duped by a luxurious bait.

Enter the DUKE, THORWALD, and other guests.

Friends, welcome hither in the prince's name,
 Who has appointed me his deputy
 To-night. Why this is right : while men are here,
 They should keep close and warm and thick
 together,

Many abreast. Our middle life is broad ;
 But birth and death, the turnstiles that admit us
 On earth and off it, send us, one by one,
 A solitary walk. Lord governor,
 Will you not sit ?

Thorw. You are a thrifty liver,
Keeping the measure of your time beside you.

Isbr. Sir, I'm a melancholy, lonely man,
A kind of hermit : and to meditate
Is all my being. One has said, that time
Is a great river running to eternity.
Methinks 'tis all one water, and the fragments,
That crumble off our ever-dwindling life,
Dropping into't, first make the twelve-houred
circle,
And that spreads outwards to the great round
Ever.

Thorw. You're fanciful.

Isbr. A very ballad-maker.
We quiet men must think and dream at least.
Who likes a rhyme among us ? My lord governor,
'Tis tedious waiting until supper time :
Shall I read some of my new poetry ?
One piece at least ?

Thorw. Well ; without further preface,
If it be brief.

Isbr. A fragment, quite unfinished,
Of a new ballad called 'The Median Supper.'
It is about Astyages ; and I
Differ in somewhat from Herodotus.
But altering the facts of history,
When they are troublesome, good governors
Will hardly visit rigorously. Attention !

(*Reads*) "Harpagus, hast thou salt enough,
Hast thou broth enough to thy kid ?
And hath the cook put right good stuff
Under the pasty lid ?"

"I've salt enough, Astyages,
And broth enough in sooth ;
And the cook hath mixed the meat and grease
Most tickling to my tooth."

So spake no wild red Indian swine,
Eating a forest rattle-snake :
But Harpagus, that Mede of mine,
And king Astyages so spake.

"Wilt have some fruit? Wilt have some wine?
Here's what is soft to chew ;
I plucked it from a tree divine,
More precious never grew."

Harpagus took the basket up,
Harpagus brushed the leaves away ;
But first he filled a brimming cup,
For his heart was light and gay.

And then he looked, and saw a face,
Chopped from the shoulders of some one ;
And who alone could smile in grace
So sweet? Why, Harpagus, thy son.

"Alas !" quoth the king, "I've no fork,
Alas ! I've no spoon of relief,
Alas ! I've no neck of a stork
To push down this throttling grief.

"We've played at kid for child, lost both ;
I'd give you the limbs if I could ;
Some lie in your platter of broth :
Good-night, and digestion be good."

Now Harpagus said not a word,
Did no eye-water spill :
His heart replied, for that had heard ;
And hearts' replies are still.

How do you like it ?

Duke. Poetry, they say,
Should be the poet's soul ; and here, methinks,
In every word speaks yours.

Isbr. Good. Do'nt be glad too soon.
Do ye think I've done ? Three minutes' patience
more.

A cannibal of his own boy,
He is a cannibal uncommon ;
And Harpagus, he is my joy,
Because he wept not like a woman.

From the old supper-giver's poll
He tore the many-kingdomed mitre ;
To him, who cost him his son's soul,
He gave it ; to the Persian fighter :
And quoth,
“ Old art thou, but a fool in blood :
If thou hast made me eat my son,
Cyrus hath ta'en his grandsire's food ;
There's kid for child, and who hath won ?

“ All kingdomless is thy old head,
In which began the tyrannous fun ;
Thou'rt slave to him, who should be dead :
There's kid for child, and who has won ?”

Now let the clock strike, let the clock strike now,
And world be altered !

*[The clock strikes one, and the hour is repeated
from the steeples of the city.]*

Trusty time-piece,
Thou hast struck a mighty hour, and thy work's
done ;

For never shalt thou count a meaner one.

[He dashes it on the ground.]

Thus let us break our old life of dull hours,
And hence begin a being, counted not
By minutes, but by glories and delights.

[He steps to a window and throws it open.]

Thou steeped city, that dost lie below,
Time doth demand whether thou wilt be free.

Now give thine answer.

*[A trumpet is heard, followed by a peal of
cannon. Beacons are fired, etc. The
stage is lined with soldiery.]*

Thorw. Traitor, desperate traitor !

Yet betrayed traitor ! Make a path for me,
Or, by the majesty that thou offendest,
Thou shalt be struck with lightning in thy triumph.

*Isbr. All kingdomless is the old mule,
In whom began the tyrannous fun ;
Thou'rt slave to him, who was thy fool ;
There's Duke for Brother ; who has won ?*

Take the old man away.

Thorw. I go : but my revenge
Hangs, in its unseen might, godlike around you.

[Exit guarded.]

Isbr. To work, my friends, to work ! Each man
his way.

These present instants, cling to them ; hold fast ;
And spring from this one to the next, still upwards.
They're rungs of Jacob's heaven-scaling ladder :
Haste, or 'tis drawn away. [*Exeunt ceteri.*

O stingey nature,
To make me but one man ! Had I but body
For every several measure of thought and will,
This night should see me world-crowned.

Enter a Messenger.

What news bring'st thou ?

Messr. Friends of the governor hold the strong-
est tower,

And shoot with death's own arrows.

Isbr. Get thee back,
And never let me hear thy voice again,
Unless to say, "'tis taken." Hark ye, sirrah ;
Wood in its walls, lead on its roof, the tower
Cries, "Burn me !" Go and cut away the draw-
bridge,

And leave the quiet fire to himself :

He knows his business. [*Exit Messenger.*

Enter ZIBA armed.

What with you ?

Ziba. I'll answer,

When one of us is undermost.

Isbr. Ha ! Midnight,

Can a slave fight ?

Ziba. None better. Come ; we'll struggle,
And roar, and dash, and tumble in our rage,

As doth the long-jawed, piteous crocodile
With the blood-howling hippopotamus,
In quaking Nile.

Isbr. Not quite so great ; but rather,
Like to a Hercules of crockery
Slaying a Nemean lion of barley-sugar,
On a twelfth cake.

[*They fight : ZIBA is disarmed.*

Now darest thou cry for mercy ?

Ziba. Never. Eternity ! Come give me that,
And I will thank thee.

Isbr. Something like a man,
And something like a fool. Thou'rt such a reptile,
That I do like thee : pick up thy black life :
I would not make my brother King and Fool,
Friend Death, so poor a present. Hence !

[*Exit ZIBA.*

They're busy.

'Tis a hot hour, which Murder steals from Love,
To beget ghosts in.

Enter SIEGFRIED.

Now ?

Siegfr. Triumph ! They cannot stand another
half hour.

The loyal had all supped and gone to bed :
When our alarms thundered, they could only
Gaze from their frightened windows : and some few
We had in towers and churches to besiege.
But, when one hornet's nest was burnt, the rest
Cried quarter, and went home to end their naps.

Isbr. 'Twas good. I knew it was well planned,
Return,

And finish all. I'll follow thee, and see
How Mars looks in his night-cap.

[*Exit SIEGFRIED.*]

O ! it is nothing now to be a man.
Adam, thy soul was happy that it wore
The first, new, mortal members. To have felt
The joy of the first year, when the one spirit
Kept house-warming within its fresh-built clay,
I'd be content to be as old a ghost.
Thine was the hour to live in. Now we're com-
mon,

And man is tired of being merely human ;
And I'll be something more : yet, not by tearing
This chrysalis of psyche ere its hour,
Will I break through Elysium. There are some-
times,

Even here, the means of being more than men :
And I by wine, and women, and the sceptre,
Will be, my own way, heavenly in my clay.
() you small star-mob, had I been one of you,
I would have seized the sky some moonless night,
And made myself the sun ; whose morrow rising
Shall see me new-created by myself.
Come, come ; to rest, my soul. I must sleep off
This old plebeian creature that I am. [Exit.]

ACT V.

SCENE I.

An apartment in the ducal castle.

ISBRAND *and* SIEGFRIED.

Siegfr. They still wait for you in their council chamber,

And clamorously demand the keys of the treasure,
The stores of arms, lists of the troops you've hired,
Reports of your past acts, and your intentions
Towards the new republic.

Isbr. They demand !

A phrase politer would have pleased me better.
The puppets, whose heart strings I hold and play
Between my thumb and fingers, this way, that
way ;

Through whose masks, wrinkled o'er by age and
passion,

My voice and spirit hath spoken continually ;
Dare now to ape free will? Well done, Prometheus !

Thou'st pitied Punch and given him a soul,
And all his wooden peers. The tools I've used
To chisel an old heap of stony laws,
The abandoned sepulchre of a dead dukedom,
Into the form my spirit loved and longed for ;
Now that I've perfected her beauteous shape,
And animated it with half my ghost ;

Now that I lead her to our bridal bed,
 Dare the mean instruments to lay their plea,
 Or their demand forsooth, between us? Go;
 And tell the fools, (you'll find them pale, and
 dropping
 Cold tears of fear out of their trembling cheek-
 pores ;)
 Tell them, for comfort, that I only laughed ;
 And bid them all to sup with me to-night,
 When we will call the cup to counsel.

Siegfr.

Mean you

Openly to assume a kingly power,
 Nor rather inch yourself into the throne?
 Perhaps—but as you will.

Isbr.

Siegfried, I'm one

That what I will must do, and what I do
 Do in the nick of time without delay.
 To-morrow is the greatest fool I know,
 Excepting those who put their trust in him.
 In one word hear, what soon they all shall hear :
 A king's a man, and I will be no man
 Unless I am a king. Why, where's the difference?
 Throne-steps divide us : they're soon climbed per-
 haps :

I have a bit of FIAT in my soul,
 And can myself create my little world.
 Had I been born a four-legged child, methinks
 I might have found the steps from dog to man,
 And crept into his nature. Are there not
 Those that fall down out of humanity,
 Into the story where the four-legged dwell?
 But to the conclave with my message quickly :
 I've got a deal to do. [*Exit SIEGFRIED.*]

How I despise
All such mere men of muscle ! It was ever
My study to find out a way to godhead,
And on reflection soon I found that first
I was but half created ; that a power
Was wanting in my soul to be its soul,
And this was mine to make. Therefore I fashioned
A will above my will, that plays upon it,
As the first soul doth use in men and cattle.
There's lifeless matter ; add the power of shaping,
And you've the crystal : add again the organs,
Wherewith to subdue sustenance to the form
And manner of one's self, and you've the plant :
Add power of motion, senses, and so forth,
And you've all kinds of beasts ; suppose a pig :
To pig add reason, foresight, and such stuff,
Then you have man. What shall we add to man,
To bring him higher ? I begin to think
That's a discovery I soon shall make.
Thus, owing nought to books, but being read
In the odd nature of much fish and fowl,
And cabbages and beasts, I've raised myself,
By this comparative philosophy,
Above your shoulders, my sage gentlemen.
Have patience but a little, and keep still,
I'll find means, bye and bye, of flying higher.

[Exit.]

SCENE II.

Another apartment.

The DUKE, SIEGFRIED, MARIO, ZIBA and conspirators.

A conspirator (to Siegfried). Said he nought else ?

Siegfr. What else he said was worse.

He is no more Isbrand of yesterday ;
But looks and talks like one, who in the night
Hath made a bloody compact with some fiend.
His being is grown greater than it was,
And must make room, by cutting off men's lives,
For its shadowy increase.

Conspir. O friends, what have we done ?
Sold, for a promise, still security,
The mild familiar laws our fathers left us ;
Uprooted our firm country.

Ziba. And now sit,
Weeping like babes, among its ruins. Up !
You have been cheated ; now turn round upon him.
In this his triumph pull away his throne,
And let him into hell.

Another conspir. But that I heard it
From you, his inmost counsel and next heart,
I'd not believe it. Why, the man was open ;
We looked on him, and saw our looks reflected ;
Our hopes and wishes found an echo in him ;
He pleased us all, I think. Let's doubt the worst,
Until we see.

Duke. Until you feel and perish.
 You looked on him, and saw your looks reflected,
 Because his soul was in a dark deep well,
 And must draw down all others to increase it
 Your hopes and wishes found an echo in him,
 As out of a sepulchral cave, prepared
 For you and them to sleep in. To be brief,
 He is the foe of all; let all be his,
 And he must be o'erwhelmed.

Siegfr. I throw him off,
 Although I feared to say so in his presence,
 And think you all will fear. O that we had
 Our good old noble Duke, to help us here!

Duke. Of him I have intelligence. The gover-
 nor,
 Whose guards are bribed and awed by these good
 tidings,
 Waits us within. There we will speak at large :
 And O ! may justice, for this once, descend
 Like lightning-footed vengeance.

Mario. It will come ;
 But when, I know not. Liberty, whose shade
 Attends, smiles still in patience, and that smile
 Melts tyrants down in time : and, till she bids,
 To strike were unavailing.

[*Exeunt all but SIEGFRIED and ZIBA.*

Ziba. Let them talk :
 I mean to do ; and will let no one's thoughts
 Or reasonable cooling counsels, mix
 In my resolve to weaken it, as little
 As shall a drop of rain or pity-water
 Adulterate this thick blood-curdling liquor.
 Siegfried, I'll free you from this thankless master.

Siegfr. I understand. To-night? Why that is best.

Man's greatest secret, like the earth's, the devil,
Slips through a key-hole or the smallest chink.
In plottings there is still some crack unstopped,
Some heart not air-tight, some fellow who doth
talk

In sleep or in his cups, or tells his tale,
Love-drunk, unto his secret-selling mistress.
How shall't be done though?

Ziba. I'm his cup-bearer ;
An office that he gave me in derision,
And I will execute so cunningly
That he shall have no lips, to laugh with, long ;
Nor spare and spurn me, as he did last night.
Let him beware, who shows a dogged slave
Pity or mercy ! For the drug, 'tis good :
There is a little, hairy, green-eyed snake,
Of voice like to the woody nightingale,
And ever singing pitifully sweet,
That nestles in the barry bones of death,
And is his dearest pet and play-fellow.
The honied froth about that serpent's tongue
Deserves not so his habitation's name,
As doth this liquor. That's the liquor for him.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

*A meadow.*SIBYLLA *and ladies, gathering flowers.**Sibyl.* Enough ; the dew falls, and the glow-worm's shining :Now let us search our baskets for the fairest
Among our flowery booty, and then sort them.*Lady.* The snowdrops are all gone ; but here
are cowslips,And primroses, upon whose petals maidens,
Who love to find a moral in all things,
May read a lesson of pale bashfulness ;
And violets, that have taught their young buds
whiteness,That blue-eyed ladies' lovers might not tear them
For the old comparison ; daisies without number,
And buttercups and lilies of the vale.*Sibyl.* Sit then ; and we will bind some up with
rushes,And wind us garlands. Thus it is with man ;
He looks on nature as his supplement,
And still will find out likenesses and tokens
Of consanguinity, in the world's graces,
To his own being. So he loves the rose,
For the cheek's sake, whose touch is the most
gratefulAt night-fall to his lip ; and, as the stars rise,
Welcomes the memories of delighting glances,

Which go up as an answer o'er his soul.

Lady. And therefore earth and all its ornaments,
Which are symbols of humanity
In forms refined, and efforts uncompleted,
Graceful and innocent, temper the heart,
Of him who muses and compares them skilfully,
To glad belief and tearful gratitude.
This is the sacred source of poesy.

Sibyl. While we are young, and free from care,
we think so.

But, when old age or sorrow brings us nearer
To spirits and their interests, we see
Few features of mankind in outward nature ;
But rather signs inviting us to heaven.
I love flowers too ; not for a young girl's reason,
But because these brief visitors to us
Rise yearly from the neighbourhood of the dead,
To show us how far fairer and more lovely
Their world is ; and return thither again,
Like parting friends that beckon us to follow,
And lead the way silent and smilingly.
Fair is the season when they come to us,
Unfolding the delights of that existence
Which is below us : 'tis the time of spirits,
Who with the flowers, and like them, leave their
graves :

But when the earth is sealed, and none dare come
Upwards to cheer us, and man's left alone,
We have cold, cutting winter. For no bridal,
Excepting with the grave, are flowers fit emblems.

Lady. And why then do we pluck and wreath
them now ?

Sibyl. Because a bridal with the grave is near.

You will have need of them to strew a corpse.
Ay, maidens, I am dying ; but lament not :
It is to me a wished for change of being.
Yonder behold the evening star arising,
Appearing bright over the mountain-tops ;
He has just died out of another region,
Perhaps a cloudy one ; and so die I ;
And the high heaven, serene and light with joy,
Which I pass into, will be my love's soul,
That will encompass me ; and I shall tremble,
A brilliant star of never-dying delight,
Mid the ethereal depth of his eternity.
Now lead me homewards : and I'll lay me down,
To sleep not, but to rest : then strew me o'er
With these flowers fresh out of the ghosts' abodes,
And they will lead me softly down to them.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

The ruined cathedral, the sepulchre, and the cloisters ; on which latter is painted the DANCE OF DEATH. In the foreground a large covered table, with empty chairs set round it. Moonlight. The clock strikes twelve ; on which is heard a

Song in the air.

The moon doth mock and make me crazy,
And midnight tolls her horrid claim
On ghostly homage. Fie, for shame !
Death, to stand painted there so lazy.

There's nothing but the stars about us,
And they're no tell-tales, but shine quiet :
Come out, and hold a midnight riot,
Where no mortal fool dare flout us :
And, as we rattle in the moonlight pale,
Wanderers shall think 'tis the nightingale.

*[The Deaths, and the figures paired with them,
come out of the walls : some seat themselves at
the table, and appear to feast, with mocking
gestures ; others dance fantastically to a
rattling music, singing—*

Mummies and skeletons, out of your stones ;
Every age, every fashion, and figure of Death :
The death of the giant with petrified bones ;
The death of the infant who never drew breath.
Little and gristly, or bony and big,
White and clattering, grassy and yellow ;
The partners are waiting, so strike up a jig,
Dance and be merry, for Death's a droll fellow.
The emperor and empress, the king and the queen,
The knight and the abbot, friar fat, friar thin,
The gipsy and beggar, are met on the green ;
Where's Death and his sweetheart ? We want
to begin.

In circles, and mazes, and many a figure,
Through clouds, over chimnies and corn-fields
yellow,
We'll dance and laugh at the red-nosed grave-
digger,
Who dreams not that Death is so merry a fellow.
*[One with a scythe, who has stood sentinel,
now sings.*

Although my old ear
 Hath neither hammer nor drum,
 Methinks I can hear
 Living skeletons come.
 The cloister re-echoes the call,
 And it frightens the lizard,
 And, like an old hen, the wall
 Cries "Cluck ! cluck ! back to my gizzard ;
 'Tis warm, though it's stony,
 My chickens so bony."

So come let us hide, each with his bride,
 For the wicked are coming who have not yet died.

*[The Deaths return to their places
 in the wall.]*

*Enter ISBRAND, the DUKE, SIEGFRIED, MARIO,
 WOLFRAM as fool, and conspirators, followed by
 ZIBA and other attendants.*

Isbr. You wonder at my banqueting-house
 perhaps :

But 'tis my fashion, when the sky is clear,
 To drink my wine out in the open air :
 And this our sometime meeting-place is shadowy,
 And the wind howleth through the ruins bravely.
 Now sit, my gentle guests : and you, dark man,

[To WOLFRAM.]

Make us as merry as you can, and proudly
 Bear the new office, which your friend, the pilgrim,
 Has begged for you : 'twas my profession once ;
 Do justice to that cap.

Duke. Now, having washed our hearts of love
 and sorrow,

And pledged the rosiness of many a cheek,

And, with the name of many a lustrous maiden,
Ennobled enough cups ; feed, once again,
Our hearing with another merry song.

Isbr. 'Tis pity that the music of this dukedom,
Under the former government, went wrong,
Like all the rest : my ministers shall look to't.
But sing again, my men.

Siegfr. What shall it be,
And of what turn ? Shall battle's drum be heard ?
The chase's trumpet ? Shall the noise of Bacchus
Swell in our cheeks, or lazy, sorrowing love
Burthen with sighs our ballad ?

Isbr. Try the piece,
You sang me yesternight to sleep with best.
It is for such most profitable ends
We crownèd folks encourage all the arts.

Song.

My goblet's golden lips are dry,
And, as the rose doth pine
For dew, so doth for wine
My goblet's cup ;
Rain, O ! rain, or it will die ;
Rain, fill it up !

Arise, and get thee wings to-night,
Ætna ! and let run o'er
Thy wines, a hill no more,
But darkly frown
A cloud, where eagles dare not soar,
Dropping rain down.

Isbr. A very good and thirsty melody :
What say you to it, my court poet ?

Wolfr. Good melody ! If this be a good melody,
I have at home, fattening in my sty,
A sow that grunts above the nightingale.
Why this will serve for those who feed their veins
With crust, and cheese of dandelion's milk,
And the pure Rhine. When I am sick o' mornings,
With a horn-spoon tinkling my porridge-pot,
'Tis a brave ballad : but in Bacchanal night,
O'er wine, red, black, or purple-bubbling wine,
That takes a man by the brain and whirls him
round,
By Bacchus' lip ! I like a full-voiced fellow,
A craggy-throated, fat-checked trumpeter,
A barker, a moon-howler, who could sing
Thus, as I heard the snaky mermaids sing
In Phlegethon, that hydrophobic river,
One May-morning in Hell.

Song.

Old Adam, the carrion crow,
The old crow of Cairo ;
He sat in the shower, and let it flow
Under his tail and over his crest ;
And through every feather
Leaked the wet weather ;
And the bough swung under his nest ;
For his beak it was heavy with marrow.
Is that the wind dying ? O no ;
It's only two devils, that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghosts' moonshine.

Ho ! Eve, my grey carrion wife,
When we have supped on kings' marrow,

Where shall we drink and make merry our life?
 Our nest it is queen Cleopatra's skull,
 'Tis cloven and cracked,
 And battered and hacked,
 But with tears of blue eyes it is full :
 Let us drink then, my raven of Cairo.
 Is that the wind dying? O no ;
 It's only two devils, that blow
 Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
 In the ghosts' moonshine.

Isbr. Pilgrim, it is with pleasure I acknowledge,
 In this your friend, a man of genuine taste :
 He imitates my style in prose and verse :
 And be assured that this deserving man
 Shall soon be knighted, when I have invented
 The name of my new order ; and perhaps
 I'll make him minister. I pledge you, Fool :
 Black ! something exquisite.

Ziba. Here's wine of Egypt,
 Found in a Memphian cellar, and perchance
 Pressed from its fruit to wash Sesostris' throat,
 Or sweeten the hot palate of Cambyzes.
 See how it pours, thick, clear, and odorous.

Isbr. 'Tis full, without a bubble on the top :
 Pour him the like. Now give a toast.

Wolfr. Excuse me :
 I might offend perhaps, being blunt, a stranger,
 And rustically speaking rustic thoughts.

Isbr. That shall not be : give us what toast you
 will,
 We'll empty all our goblets at the word,
 Without demur.

Siegfr. Well, since the stranger's silent,
 I'll give a toast, which, I can warrant you,
 Was yet ne'er drunk. There is a bony man,
 Through whom the sun shines, when the sun is out ;
 Or the rain drops, when any clouds are weeping ;
 Or the wind blows, if Æolus will ; his name,
 And let us drink to his success and sanity ;—
 But will you truly ?

Isbr. Truly, as I said.

Siegfr. Then round with the health of Death,
 round with the health
 Of Death the bony, Death the great ; round,
 round.

Empty yourselves, all cups, unto the health
 Of great King Death !

Wolfr. Set down the cup, Isbrand, set the cup
 down.

Drink not, I say.

Siegfr. And what's the matter now ?

Isbr. What do you mean, by bidding me not
 drink ?

Answer, I'm thirsty.

Wolfr. Push aside the boughs :
 Let's see the night, and let the night see us.

Isbr. Will the fool read us astronomic lectures ?

Wolfr. Above stars ; stars below ; round the
 moon stars.

Isbrand, don't sip the grape-juice.

Isbr. Must I drink,

Or not, according to a horoscope ?

Says Jupiter, no ? Then he's a hypocrite.

Wolfr. Look upwards, how 'tis thick and full,
 how sprinkled,

This heaven, with the planets. Now, consider ;
Which will you have ? The sun's already taken,
But you may find an oar in the half moon,
Or drive the comet's dragons ; or, if you'd be
Rather a little snug and quiet god,
A one-horse star is standing ready for you.
Choose, and then drink.

Isbr. If you are sane or sober,

What do you mean ?

Wolfr. It is a riddle, sir,

Siegfried, your friend, can solve.

Siegfr. Some sorry jest.

Wolfr. You'll laugh but palely at its sting, I
think.

Hold the dog down ; disarm him ; grasp his right.
My lord, this worthy courtier loved your virtues
To such excess of piety, that he wished
To send you by a bye-path into heaven.
Drink, and you're straight a god—or something else.

A conspirator. O murderous villain ! Kill him
where he sits.

Isbr. Be quiet, and secure him. Siegfried,
Siegfried ;

Why hast thou no more genius in thy villany ?
Wilt thou catch kings in cobwebs ? Lead him
hence :

Chain him to-night in prison, and to-morrow
Put a cord round his neck and hang him up,
In the society of the old dog
That killed my neighbour's sheep.

Siegfr. I do thank thee.

In faith, I hoped to have seen grass grow o'er you,
And should have much rejoiced. But, as it is,

I'll willingly die upright in the sun :
And I can better spare my life than you.
Good-night then, Fool and Duke: you have my
curse :

And Hell will have you some day down for hers :
So let us part like friends. My lords, good sleep
This night, the next I hope you'll be as well
As I shall. Should there be a lack of rope,
I recommend my bowstring as a strong one.
Once more, farewell : I wish you all, believe me,
Happily old, mad, sick, and dead, and cursed.

[Exit guarded.

Isbr. That gentleman should have applied his talent

To writing new-year's wishes. Another cup!

Wolfr. He has made us dull: so I'll begin a story.
As I was newly dead, and sat beside
My corpse, looking on it, as one who muses
Gazing upon a house he was burnt out of,
There came some merry children's ghosts, to play
At hide-and-seek in my old body's corners:—

Isbr. But how came you to die and yet be here?

Wolfr. Did I say so? Excuse me. I am absent,
And forget always that I'm just now living.
But dead and living, which are which? A question
Not easy to be solved. Are you alone,
Men, as you're called, monopolists of life?
Or is all being, living? and *what is*,
With less of toil and trouble, more alive,
Than they, who cannot, half a day, exist
Without repairing their flesh mechanism?
Or do you owe your life, not to this body,
But to the sparks of spirit that fly off,

Each instant disengaged and hurrying
From little particles of flesh that die ?
If so, perhaps you are the dead yourselves :
And these ridiculous figures on the wall
Laugh, in their safe existence, at the prejudice,
That you are anything like living beings.
But hark ! The bells tolls, and a funeral comes.

*[A funeral procession crosses the stage ; the
pall borne by ladies.]*

Dirge.

We do lie beneath the grass
In the moonlight, in the shade
Of the yew-tree. They that pass
Hear us not. We are afraid
They would envy our delight,
In our graves by glow-worm night.
Come follow us, and smile as we ;
We sail to the rock in the ancient waves,
Where the snow falls by thousands into the sea,
And the drowned and the shipwrecked have
happy graves.

[Exeunt.]

Duke. What's this that comes and goes, so
shadow-like ?

Attendant. They bear the fair Sibylla to her
grave.

Duke. She dead !

Darest thou do this, thou grave-begotten man,
Thou son of Death ? *[To WOLFRAM.]*

Wolfr. Sibylla dead already ?

I wondered how so fair a thing could live :

And, now she is no more, it seems to me
She was too beautiful ever to die !

Isbr. She, who was to have been my wife?

Here, fellow ;

Take thou this flower to strew upon her grave,
A lily of the valley ; it bears bells,
For even the plants, it seems, must have their
fool,

So universal is the spirit of folly ;
And whisper, to the nettles of her grave,
“ King Death hath asses’ ears.”

Mario (stabbing Isbrand). At length thou art
condemned to punishment.

Down, thou usurper, to the earth and grovel !
The pale form, that has led me up to thee,
Bids me deal this ; and, now my task is o’er,
Beckons me hence. *[Exit.]*

Isbr. Villain, thou dig’st deep :
But think you I will die ? No : should I groan,
And close my eyes, be fearful of me still.
’Tis a good jest : I but pretend to die,
That you may speak about me bold and loudly ;
Then I come back and punish : or I go
To dethrone Pluto. It is wine I spilt,
Not blood, that trickles down.

Enter THORWALD with soldiers.

Thorw. Long live duke Melveric, our rightful
sovereign !
Down with the traitorous usurper, Isbrand !

All. Long live duke Melveric !

Isbr. Duke Isbrand, long live he !
Duke Melveric is deposed.

Thorw. Receive the homage
Of your revolted city.

Duke. Thorwald, thanks.
The usurper has his death-wound.

Thorw. Then cry, Victory !
And Long life to duke Melveric ! once more.

Isbr. I will live longer : when he's dead and
buried,

A hundred years hence, or, it may be, more,
I shall return and take my dukedom back.

Imagine not I'm weak enough to perish :
The grave, and all its arts, I do defy.

Wolfr. Meantime Death sends you back this
cap of office.

At his court you're elected to the post :
Go, and enjoy it.

[*He sets the fool's cap on ISBRAND'S head.*]

Isbr. Bye and bye. But let not
Duke Melveric think that I part unrevenged :
For I hear in the clouds about me voices,
Singing

*All kingdomless is thy old head,
In which began the tyrannous fun ;
He fetches thee, who should be dead ;
There's Duke for Brother ! Who has won ?*

I jest and sing, and yet alas ! am he,
Who in a wicked masque would play the Devil ;
But jealous Lucifer himself appeared,
And bore him—whither ? I shall know to-morrow,
For now Death makes indeed a fool of me. [*Dies.*]

Duke. Where are my sons ? I have not seen
them lately.

Go to the bridegroom's lodgings, and to Athulf's,
And summon both. [Exit Attendant.

Wolfr. They will be here ; and sooner
Than you would wish. Meanwhile, my noble
Duke,

Some friends of mine behind us seem to stir.
They wish, in honour of your restoration,
In memory also of your glorious deeds,
To present masque and dance to you. Is't
granted ?

Duke. Surely ; and they are welcome, for we
need
Some merriment amid these sad events.

Wolfr. You in the wall there then, my thin
light archers,
Come forth and dance a little : 'tis the season
When you may celebrate Death's Harvest-home.

*[A dance of Deaths. In the middle of it enter
AMALA, followed by a bier, on which the
corpse of ADALMAR is borne. The dance
goes out.]*

Duke. What's this ? Another mummary ?
Wolfr. The antimasque,
I think they call it ; 'tis satirical.

Amala. My lord, you see the bridal bed that
waits me.

Your son, my bridegroom, both no more, lies here,
Cold, pale, abandoned in his youthful blood :
And I his bride have now no duty else,
But to kneel down, wretched, beside his corpse,
Crying for justice on his murderers.

Duke. Could my son die, and I not know it
sooner ?

Why, he is cold and stiff. O ! now my crown
Is sunk down to the dust, my life is desolate.
Who did this deed ?

Enter ATHULF.

Wolfr. Athulf, answer thou ?

Amala. O no ! Suspect not him. He was last
night

Gentle, and full of love, to both of us,
And could imagine ne'er so foul a deed.
Suspect not him ; for so thou mak'st me feel
How terrible it is that he is dead,
Since his next friend's accused of such a murder :
And torture not his ghost, which must be here,
Striving in vain to utter one soul-sound,
To speak the guiltless free. Tempt not cruelly
The helplessness of him who is no more,
Nor make him discontented with the state,
Which lets him not assert his brother's innocence.

Duke (to Athulf). Answer ! Thou look'st like
one, unto whose soul

A secret voice, all day and night, doth whisper,
"Thou art a murderer." Is it so ? Then rather
Speak not. Thou wear'st a dagger at thy side ;
Avenge the murdered man, thou art his brother ;
And never let me hear from mortal lips
That my son was so guilty.

Athulf. Amala,

Still love me ; weep some gentle drops for me ;
And, when we meet again, fulfil thy promise.
Father, look here !

[*He kisses AMALA'S hand and stabs himself.*]

Amala. O Athulf ! live one moment to deny it ;

I ask that, and that only. Lo ! old man,
He hath in indignation done the deed.
Since thou could'st think him for an instant guilty,
He held the life, which such a base suspicion
Had touched, and the old father who could
think it,
Unworthy of him more : and he did well.
I bade thee give me vengeance for my bridegroom,
And thou hast slain the only one who loved me.
Suspect and kill me too : but there's no need ;
For such a one, as I, God never let
Live more than a few hours.

[She falls into the arms of her ladies.

Duke. Thorwald, the crown is yours ; I reign
no more.

But when, thou spectre, is thy vengeance o'er ?

Wolfr. Melveric, all is finished, which to witness
The spirit of retribution called me hither.
Thy sons have perished for like cause, as that
For which thou did'st assassinate thy friend.
Sibylla is before us gone to rest.
Blessing and Peace to all who are departed !
But thee, who daredst to call up into life,
And the unholy world's forbidden sunlight,
Out of his grave him who reposed softly,
One of the ghosts doth summon, in like manner,
Thee, still alive, into the world o' th' dead.

[Exit with the Duke into the sepulchre.

The curtain falls.

DEDICATORY STANZAS.

WHO findeth comfort in the stars and flowers
 Apparelling the earth and evening sky,
 That moralize throughout their silent hours,
 And woo us heaven-wards till we wish to die ;
 Oft hath he singled from the soothing quire,
 For its calm influence, one of softest charm
 To still his bosom's pangs, when they desire
 A solace for the world's remorseless harm.
 Yet they, since to be beautiful and bless
 Is but their way of life, will still remain
 Cupbearers to the bee in humbleness,
 Or look untouched down through the moony rain,
 Living and being worlds in bright content,
 Ignorant, not in scorn, of his affection's bent.

So thou, whom I have gazed on, seldom seen,
 Perchance forgotten to the very name,
 Hast in my thoughts the living glory been,
 In beauty various, but in grace the same.
 At eventide, if planets were above,
 Crowning anew the sea of day hereft,
 Swayed by the dewy heaviness of love,
 My heart felt pleasure in the track thou'dst left :
 And so all sights, all musings, pure and fair,
 Touching me, raised thy memory to sight,
 As the sea-suns awake the sun in air,—
 If they were not reflections, thou the light.

Therefore bend hitherwards, and let thy mildness
Be glassed in fragments, through this storm and
wildness.

And pardon, if the sick light of despair
Usurp thy semblance oft, with tearful gleam
Displaying haunted shades of tangled care
In my sad scenes : soon shall a pearly beam,
Shed from the forehead of my heaven's queen,—
That front thy hand is pressed on,—bring delight.
Nor frown, nor blame me, if, such charms between,
Spring mockery, or thoughts of dreadest night.
Death's darts are sometimes Love's. So Nature
tells,
When laughing waters close o'er drowning men ;
When in flowers' honied corners poison dwells ;
When Beauty dies : and the unwearied ken,
Of those who seek a cure for long despair,
Will learn. Death hath his dimples everywhere ;
Love only on the cheek, which is to me most fair.



NOTES.

THE historical fact, on which the preceding drama may be considered as founded, viz., that a Duke of Munsterberg in Silesia was stabbed to death by his court-fool, is to be found in Flögel's *Gesch. d. Hoffnarren Liegnitz v. Leipzig 1789. 8. S. 297 u. folg.*

Page 91, line 21.

'Aldabaron, called by the Hebrews Luz.'

As this antiquity in osteological history seems to have been banished from anatomical works since the good old days of Bartholinus and Kulmus, it will perhaps be agreeable to the curious reader to find here some notice of it, collected out of the rabbinical writings, &c., by the author's Russian friend Bernhard Reich, whose knowledge of the science and language renders him singularly capable of such investigations.

The bone Luz (לוז) is, according to the Rabbins, the only one which withstands dissolution after death, and out of which the body will be developed at the resurrection. A curious passage on the subject occurs in Berestieth raba. Sec. 28, במחזור מפילד לוז, שד שדרה שממע הקבה כעיק את האדם בעתיד לגא

"Even the Luz of the shedrah, שדרה (*backbone*), out of which God will hereafter raise the son of earth, is annihilated." Old anatomists as Bartholinus, Vesalius, &c., mention it, but are not

certain what bone was so designated, whether it is situated in the hand, foot, or vertebral column, Luz לוז is however beyond a doubt the os coccygis of the osteologists, for the rabbins say that it lies under the 18th Chulia חוליה *vertebra* (Maaroch Hamarachot, Article לוז), and it appears from various passages in the Talmud that the vertebræ of the neck were not reckoned by the rabbinical writers to the vertebral column שררה, but that they began to count the latter from the first dorsal vertebra, like Hippocrates (de ossium naturâ. V.). They say 18 vertebræ (חוליות) compose the shedrah שדרה vertebral column—See Ohol. c. 1. Berach, p. 30. Now, if we reckon the twelve dorsal, five lumbal, vertebræ, and the os sacrum together, we have the eighteen bones under which Luz is to be found : Luz is therefore the os coccygis. Etymology is also for this opinion ; for Luz לוז is an almond ; the Targum Jonathan translates in many places the Hebrew Shaked שקד almond, plural Skedim שקדים Luz and Luzin לוזין (Num. 17. 23, &c.). The form of the bone is really similar to that of an almond. In the lexicon we find the explanation of the word given from κόκκυξ, cuckoo, but this bird appears to have very little to do with the bone, and it is probable that the term is derived by some corruption from κακὰς, a nut or the seed of any tree.



FRAGMENTS OF DEATH'S
JEST-BOOK.





FRAGMENTS OF DEATH'S JEST-BOOK.

SLEEPER'S COUNTENANCE CONTEMPLATED.

Duke.

THERE smiles methinks
A cherished dream, that lies upon her
lips
As the word love deep written in a rose,
With which the story of our youth begins.
Could'st thou but see whose image so delights her !
Ziba. Her thoughts are far from us in early
childhood :
For 'tis our wont to dream of distant friends
And half-forgotten times.

A BEAUTIFUL NIGHT.

How lovely is the heaven of this night,
How deadlly still its earth ! The forest brute
Has crept into his cave, and laid himself
Where sleep has made him harmless like the lamb.
The horrid snake, his venom now forgot,
Is still and innocent as the honied flower
Under his head : and man, in whom are met

Leopard and snake, and all the gentleness
 And beauty of the young lamb and the bird,
 Has let his ghost out, put his thoughts aside
 And lent his senses unto death himself.

A COUNTEenance FOREBODING FAIR.

THY gloomy features, like a midnight dud,
 Scowl the dark index of a fearful hour.

A LOFTY MIND.

HIS thoughts are so much higher than his state,
 That, like a mountain hanging o'er a hut,
 They chill and darken it.

SORROW.

SORROW! Hast thou seen Sorrow asleep,
 When thick sighs break the wholeness of her mouth,
 And one tear trembles in her upward eye,
 Part clammy on the dark threads of her lash,
 Part yet within her dream? One moony night
 I found her so, a pale, cold babe, and beautiful,
 In slumber, as Consumption, just before
 She's christened Death. I pressed her in my arms,
 And took upon my lip the hurrying tear
 Off her warm neck.

SAD AND CHEERFUL SONGS CONTRASTED.

SING me no more such ditties: they are well
 For the last gossips, when the snowy wind
 Howls in the chimney till the very taper
 Trembles with its blue flame, and the bolted gate.

Rattle before old winter's palsied hand.
If you will sing, let it be cheerily
Of dallying love. There's many a one among you
Hath sung, beneath our oak trees to his maiden,
Light bird-like mockeries fit for love in spring time.
Sing such a one.

A SUBTERRANEAN CITY.

I FOLLOWED once a fleet and mighty serpent
Into a cavern in a mountain's side ;
And, wading many lakes, descending gulphs,
At last I reached the ruins of a city,
Built not like ours but of another world,
As if the aged earth had loved in youth
The mightiest city of a perished planet,
And kept the image of it in her heart,
So dream-like, shadowy, and spectral was it.
Nought seemed alive there, and the bony dead
Were of another world the skeletons.
The mammoth, ribbed like to an arched cathedral,
Lay there, and ruins of great creatures else
More like a shipwrecked fleet, too vast they seemed
For all the life that is to animate :
And vegetable rocks, tall sculptured palms,
Pines grown, not hewn, in stone ; and giant ferns,
Whose earthquake-shaken leaves bore graves for
 nests.

MAN'S ANXIOUS, BUT INEFFECTUAL, GUARD
AGAINST DEATH.

LUCKLESS man
Avoids the miserable bodkin's point,

And, flinching from the insect's little sting,
In pitiful security keeps watch,
While 'twixt him and that hypocrite the sun,
To which he prays, comes windless pestilence,
Transparent as a glass of poisoned water
Through which the drinker sees his murderer
 smiling ;
She stirs no dust, and makes no grass to nod,
Yet every footstep is a thousand graves,
And every breath of her's as full of ghosts
As a sunbeam with motes.

A DAY OF SURPASSING BEAUTY.

THE earth is bright, her forests all are golden ;
A cloud of flowers breathes blushing over her,
And, whispering from bud to blossom, opens
The half-awakened memory of the song
She heard in childhood from the mystic sun.
There is some secret stirring in the world,
A thought that seeks impatiently its word :
A crown, or cross, for one is born to-day.

THE SLIGHT AND DEGENERATE NATURE OF
MAN.

Antediluvianus loquitur.

PITIFUL post-diluvians ! from whose hearts
The print of passions by the tide of hours
Is washed away for ever
As lions' footmark on the ocean sands ;
While we, Adam's coevals, carry in us
The words indelible of buried feelings,

Like the millennial trees, whose hoary barks
Grow o'er the secrets cut into their core.

A NIGHT-SCENE.

THE lake, like her, heaves gently
Its breast of waves under a heaven of sleep,
And pictures in its soothed, transparent being
The depth of worlds o'erhanging : o'er the pillow,
Washed by the overflowing, flowery locks,
A silver promise of the moon is breathed :
And the light veil of hieroglyphic clouds
The curious wind rends ever and anon,
Revealing the deep dream of Alpine heights,
Which fill the distance of its wondering spirit,
And on its hectic cheeks the prophecies
Do fearfully reflect, that flicker up
Out of the sun's grave underneath the world.

DIRGE.

SORROW, lie still and wear
No tears, no sighings, no despair,
 No mourning weeds,
Nought that discloses
 A heart that bleeds ;
But looks contented I will bear,
 And o'er my cheeks strew roses.
Unto the world I may not weep,
But save my sorrow all, and keep
 A secret heart, sweet soul, for thee,
As the great earth and swelling sea—

MOURNERS CONSOLED.

DEAD, is he? What's that further than a word,
Hollow as is the armour of a ghost
Whose chinks the moon he haunts doth penetrate.
Belief in death is the fell superstition,
That hath appalled mankind and chained it down,
A slave unto the dismal mystery
Which old opinion dreams beneath the tombstone.
Dead is he, and the grave shall wrap him up
And this you see is he? And all is ended?
Ay *this* is cold, that was a glance of him
Out of the depth of his immortal self;
This utterance and token of his being
His spirit hath let fall, and now is gone
To fill up nature and complete her being.
The form, that here is fallen, was the engine,
Which drew a mighty stream of spiritual power
Out of the world's own soul, and made it play
In visible motion, as the lofty tower
Leads down the animating fire of heaven
To the world's use. That instrument is broken,
And in another sphere the spirit works,
Which did appropriate to human functions
A portion of the ghostly element.—
This then is all your Death.

A GREAT SACRIFICE SELF-COMPENSATED.

TRUE I have had much comfort gazing on thee,
Much too perhaps in thinking I might have thee
Nearly myself, a fellow soul to live with.
But, weighing well man's frail and perilous tenure

Of all good in the restless, wavy world,
Ne'er dared I set my soul on any thing
Which but a touch of time can shake to pieces.
Alone in the eternal is my hope.
Took I thee? that intensest joy of love
Would soon grow fainter and at last dissolve.
But, if I yield thee, there is something done
Which from the crumbling earth my soul divorces,
And gives it room to be a greater spirit.
There is a greater pang, methinks, in nature
When she takes back the life of a dead world,
Than when a new one severs from her depth
Its bright, revolving birth. So I'll not hoard thee,
But let thee part, reluctant, though in hope
That greater happiness will thence arise.

“LOVE IS WISER THAN AMBITION.”

Amala. O GIVE not up the promise of your time
For me : for what ? an evanescent woman,
A rose-leaf scarce unfolded ere it falls. Your days
Should be a wood of laurels evergreen :
Seek glory !

Athulf. Glory ! To be sung to tuneless harps !
A picture, and a name ; to live for death !
Seek glory ? Never. The world's gossip Fame
Is busy in the market-place, the change,
At court or wrangling senate, noting down
Him of the fattest purse, the fabulous crest,
The tongue right honied or most poisonous.
If Glory goes among the bristling spears,
Which war is mowing down ; or walks the
wave,

When Fate weighs kingdoms in their battle-fleets ;
 Or watches the still student at his work,
 Reading the laws of nature in the heavens,
 Or earth's minutest creature ; she may find me :
 If not, I am contented with oblivion,
 As all the other millions. My sweet fair,
 One little word of confidence and love,
 From lips belovèd, thrilleth more my heart
 Than brightest trumpet-touch of statued Fame.
 My bird of Paradise, tell me some news
 Of your own home.

Amala. My home should be your heart :
 What shall I tell of that ?

Athulf. Can you not see ?
 Surely the love that burns before thy image,
 As sunny as a burning diamond,
 Must shed its light without.

THE MURDERER'S HAUNTED COUCH.

Isbr. SO buckled tight in scaly resolution,
 Let my revenge tread on, and, if its footsteps
 Be graves, the peering eye of critic doubt,
 All dazzled by the bold, reflected day,
 May take the jaws of darkness that devour
 My swift sword's flash, as ravening serpent's
 famine
 Locks up birds' sunny life in black eclipse,
 For pity's dewy eyelid closing over
 Love's sparkles. I have seen the mottled tigress
 Sport with her cubs as tenderly and gay,
 As lady Venus with her kitten Cupids ;
 And flowers, my sagest teachers, beautiful,

Or they were fools, because death-poisonous :
 And lies, methinks, oft brighten woman's lips,
 And tears have the right pearly run and diamond
 shoot

When they bowl down false oaths. World, I will
 win thee ;

Therefore I must deceive thee, gentle World.
 Let Heaven look in upon my flaming wrath
 As into Ætna's hell : the sides man sees
 I clothe with olives, promising much peace.
 But what's this talk ? Must I be one of those
 That cannot keep a secret from himself ?
 The worst of confidants, who oft goes mad,
 Through bites of conscience, after many years.
 I came to see thee, brother : there thou art
 Even in this suit, from which no blood, save his,
 This purple doffed by thy imperial life
 Shall wash away. To the amazed foe
 I will appear thyself returned, and smite him
 Ere he has time to doubt or die of horror.
 I would I were, thus iron-hooped and sworded,
 Thy murderer's dream this night, to cry, Awake !
 Awake, Duke Melveric ! Duke Murderer !
 Wrap thee up quickly in thy winding sheet,
 Without ado ! The hearse is at the door,
 The widest gate of Hell is open for thee,
 And mighty goblins summon thee to Death.—
 Come down with me ! [*He seizes the sleeping Duke.*]

Nay, I will shake thy sleep off,
 Until thy soul falls out.

What voice more dreadful
 Than one at midnight, blood-choaked, crying
 murder ?

Why, Murder's own ! His murder's, and now
thine !

But cheer up. I will let thy blood flow on
Within its pipes to-night.

Duke. Angel of Death !

Can it be ? No, 'tis a grave-digging vision :
The world is somewhere else. Yet even this
Methought I dreamt, and now it stands beside me,
Rattling in iron.

Isbr. Ay, the murderer's vision

Is ever so : for at the word, " I'm murdered,"
The gaolers of the dead throw back the grave-stone,
Split the deep ocean, and unclothe the mountain,
And let the buried pass. I am more real
Than any airy spirit of a dream,
As Death is mightier, stronger, and more faithful
To man, than Life.

Duke. Wolfram !—Nay thy grasp

Is warm, thy bosom heaves, thou breath'st,
imposter—

Let iron answer iron, flesh crush flesh ;
Thou art no spirit, fool.

Isbr. Fool, art thou murderer,

My murderer, Wolfram's ? To the blood-stained
hand

The grave gives way : to the eye, that saw its victim
Sigh off the ravished soul, th' horrid world of ghosts
Is no more viewless ; day and night 'tis open,
Gazing on pale and bleeding spectres ever.
Come, seat thee ; no vain struggle. Write thou
here,

(And with my blood I trace it on thy brain,)
Thy sentence ; which by night, in types of fire,

Shall stand before thee, never to be closed,—
 By night the voice of blood shall whisper to thee,
 Word slowly after word, and ne'er be silent.
 Melvetic, thy conscience I will sing to sleep
 With softest hymnings; thou shalt not despair,
 But live on and grow older than all men,
 To all men's dread: like an old, haunted mountain,
 Icy and hoary, shalt thou stand 'mid life;
 And midnight tales be told in secret of thee,
 As of crime's beacon. Thou shalt see thy son
 Fall for a woman's love, as thy friend fell,
 Beneath the stabs of him, with whom together
 He was at one breast suckled. Thou shalt lose
 Friends, subjects, crown, strength, health and all
 power,
 Even despair: thou shalt not dare to break
 All men's contempt, thy life, for fear of worse:
 Nor shalt thou e'er go mad for misery.
 Write on. I leave the voice with thee, that never
 Shall cease to read thee, o'er and o'er, thy doom.
 It will the rest, the worst of all, repeat
 Till it be written.

 Thou art doomed: no trumpet
 Shall wake the bravery of thy heart to battle;
 No song of love, no beam of child's glad eye,
 Drown that soft whisper, dazzle from thy sight
 Those words indelible.

 Follow him, dearest curse;
 Be true to him, invisible to others,
 As his own soul. [Exit.

Duke. Hold! mercy! . . . 'Tis enough . . .
 Curse shoulders curse, as in a bloody river.
 I will no more.

HUMAN LIFE : ITS VALUE.

THINK, what I plead for: for a life ! the gift
Of God alone, whom he, who saves't, is likest.
How glorious to live ! Even in one thought
The wisdom of past-times to fit together,
And from the luminous minds of many men
Catch a reflected truth ; as, in one eye,
Light, from unnumbered worlds and furthest
planets
Of the star-crowded universe, is gathered
Into one ray.—





THE SECOND BROTHER.



PERSONS REPRESENTED.

MARCELLO ; } *Brothers of the Duke of Ferrara.*
ORAZIO ; }

VARINI ; } *Nobles.*
MICHELE ; }
BATTISTA ; }

EZRIL ; *a Jew.*

MELCHIOR.

VALERIA ; *Varini's daughter and Oratio's wife.*

ARMIDA.

ROSAURA.

A FEMALE ATTENDANT.

Gentlemen, ladies, guards, and attendants.

SCENE : Ferrara.



THE SECOND BROTHER.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A street in Ferrara.*

MICHELE and BATTISTA meeting: MARCELLO at
the side.

Michele.

FAIR shine this evening's stars upon your
pleasures,

Battista Sorbi!

Batt. Sir, well met to-night:
Methinks our path is one.

Mich. And all Ferrara's.
There's not a candle lit to-night at home;
And for the cups,—they'll be less wet with wine
Than is the inmost grain of all this earth
With the now-falling dew. None sit in doors,
Except the babe, and his forgotten grandsire,
And such as, out of life, each side do lie
Against the shutter of the grave or womb.
The rest that build up the great hill of life,

From the crutch-riding boy to his sweet mother,
 The deer-eyed girl, and the brown fellow of war,
 To the grey-head and grandest sire of all
 That's half in heaven,—all these are forth to-night ;
 And there they throng upon both sides the river,
 Which, guessing at its hidden banks, flows on,
 A water-stream betwixt two tides of flesh :—
 And still the streets pour on, each drop a man ;
 You'd think the deluge was turned upside down,
 And flesh was drowning water.

Batt. Where go they ?

To the feast, the wine, the lady-footed dance—
 Where you, and I, and every citizen
 That has a feathered and a jewelled cap,
 And youthful curls to hang beside it brownly,—
 To the Duke's brother, Lord Orazio's palace.

Marc. (aside). Orazio ! what of him ?

Mich. Ay, that's a man

After the heart of Bacchus ! By my life,
 There is no mortal stuff, that foots the earth,
 Able to wear the shape of man, like him,
 And fill it with the carriage of a god.
 We're but the tool's and scaffolding of men,
 The lines, the sketch, and he the very thing :
 And, if we share the name of manhood with him,
 Thus in the woods the tattered, wool-hung briar,
 And the base, bowing poplar, the winds' slave,
 Are trees,—and so's the great and kingly oak,
 Within whose branches, like a soul, does dwell
 The sun's bold eagle :—as the villain fox,
 The weazel, and the sneaking cur are beasts, --
 While he, whose wine is in a giant's heart,
 The royal lion has no bigger name.

Let men be trees, why then he is the oak ;
 Let men be beasts, he is their lion-master ;
 Let them be stars, and then he is a sun,
 A sun whose beams are gold, the night his noon,
 His summer-field a marble hall of banquets,
 With jasper, onyx, amber-leaved cups
 On golden straws for flowers, and, for the dew,
 Wine of the richest grape. So let's not talk
 And breathe away the time, whose sands are thawed
 Into such purple tears, but drink it off.

Batt. Why then, away ! let's fit our velvet arms,
 And on together. —

Marc. (advancing). Nobles of Ferrara,
 My gentle lords, have pity for a man,
 Whom fortune and the roundness of the world
 Have, from his feeble footing on its top,
 Flung to deep poverty. When I was born,
 They hid my helplessness in purple wraps,
 And cradled me within a jewelled crown.
 But now — O bitter now ! — what name of woe,
 Beyond the knowledge of the lips of hell,
 Is fitted to my poor and withering soul,
 And its old, wretched dwelling ?

Batt. What is this ?
 Methinks that a pre-adamite skeleton,
 Burst from the grave in a stolen cloak of flesh,
 Ragged and threadbare, from a witch's back,
 Who lived an hundred years, would scarcely seem
 More miserably old.

Mik. A wandering beggar,
 Come to Ferrara with the daily lie,
 That bears him bread. Come on, and heed him not.
 The stocks, old sir, grow in our streets.

Enter a Gentleman.

How now?

What's your news, sir?

Gent. He's coming through this street,
Orazio, wrapt, like Bacchus, in the hide
Of a specked panther, with his dancing nymphs,
And torches bright and many, as his slaves
Had gathered up the fragments of the sun
That fell just now. Hark! here his music comes.

*Enter ORAZIO, between ARMIDA and ROSAURA,
attended.*

Oraz. Thrice to the moon, and thrice unto the
sun,
And thrice unto the lesser stars of night,
From tower and hill, by trump and cannon's voice,
Have I proclaimed myself a deity's son:
Not Alexander's father, Ammon old,
But ivied Bacchus, do I call my sire.
Hymn it once more.

Song.

Strew not earth with empty stars,
Strew it not with roses,
Nor feathers from the crest of Mars,
Nor summer's idle powers,
'Tis not the primrose-sandalled moon,
Nor cold and silent morn,
Nor he that climbs the dusty noon,
Nor mower war with scythe that drops,
Stuck with helmed and turbaned tops
Of enemies new shorn.

Ye cups, ye lyres, ye trumpets know,
 Pour your music, let it flow,
 'Tis Bacchus' son who walks below.

Oraz. Now break that kiss, and answer me, my
 Hebe ;

Has our great sire a planet in the sky,—
 One of these lights ?

Rosau. Not yet, I think, my lord.

Oraz. My lord? my love! I am the Lord of
 Love ;

So call me by my dukedom.—He has not?
 We'll make him one, my nymph: when those
 bright eyes

Are closed, and that they shall not be, I swear,
 'Till I have loved them many thousand hours,—
 But when they are, their blue enchanted fire
 Cupid shall take upon a torch of heaven,
 And light the woody sides of some dim world,
 Which shall be Bacchus' godson-star.

Rosau. Alas !

Their fire is but unsteady, weak, and watery,
 To guess by your love's wavering.

Oraz. Wine in a ruby !

I'll solemnize their beauty in a draught,
 Pressed from the summer of an hundred vines.
 Look on't, my sweet. Rosaura, this same
 night

I will immortalize those lips of thine,
 That make a kiss so spicy. Touch the cup :
 Ruby to ruby ! Slave, let it be thrown,
 At midnight, from a boat into mid-sea :
 Rosaura's kiss shall rest unravished there,

While sea and land lie in each other's arms,
And curl the world.

Batt. Beggar, stand back, I say.

Marc. No ; I will shadow your adored mortal,
And shake my rags at him. Dost fear the plague ?
Musk-fingered boy, aside !

Oraz. What madman's this ?

Rosau. Keep him away from me !

His hideous raggedness tears the soft sight,
Where it is pictured.

Marc. Your clutch is like the grasping of a
wave :

Off from my shoulder !—Now, my velvet fellow,
Let's measure limbs. Well, is your flesh to mine
As gold to lead, or but the common plaister
That wraps up bones ? Your skin is not of silk ;
Your face not painted with an angel's feather
With tints from morning's lip, but the daubed clay ;
These veiny pipes hold a dog's lap of blood.
Let us shake hands ; I tell thee, brother skeleton,
We're but a pair of puddings for the dinner
Of Lady worm ; you served in silks and gems,
I garnished with plain rags. Have I unlocked thee ?

Oraz. Insolent beggar !

Marc. Prince ! but we must shake hands.
Look you, the round earth's sleeping like a serpent,
Who drops her dusty tail upon her crown
Just here. Oh, we are like two mountain peaks,
Of two close planets, catching in the air :
You, King Olympus, a great pile of summer,
Wearing a crown of gods ; I, the vast top
Of the ghosts' deadly world, naked and dark,
With nothing reigning on my desolate head

But one old spirit of a murdered god,
 Palaced within the corpse of Saturn's father.
 Then let's come near and hug. There's nothing
 like thee

But I thy contrast.—Thou'rt a prince, they say?

Oraz. That you shall learn. You knaves, that
 wear my livery,

Will you permit me still to be defiled
 By this worm's venom? Tread upon his neck,
 And let's walk over him.

Marc. Forbear, my lord!

I am a king of that most mighty empire,
 That's built o'er all the earth, upon kings' crowns;
 And poverty's its name; whose every hut
 Stands on a coronet, or star, or mitre,
 The glorious corner-stones.—But you are weary,
 And would be playing with a woman's cheek:
 Give me a purse then, prince.

Oraz. No, not a doit:
 The metal, I bestow, shall come in chains.

Marc. Well, I can curse. Ay, prince, you
 have a brother—

Oraz. The Duke,—he'll scourge you.

Marc. Nay, *the second*, sir,
 Who, like an envious river, flows between
 Your footsteps and Ferrara's throne.

Oraz. He's gone:
 Asia, and Africa, the sea he went on,
 Have many mouths,—and in a dozen years,
 (His absence' time,) no tidings or return,
 Tell me We are but two.

Marc. If he were in Ferrara—

Oraz. Stood he before me there,

By you, in you,—as like as you're unlike,
 Straight as you're bowed, young as you are old
 And many years nearer than him to death,
 The falling brilliancy of whose white sword
 Your ancient locks so silverly reflect,—
 I would deny, outswear, and overreach,
 And pass him with contempt, as I do you.—
 Jove ! how we waste the stars : set on, my friends.

Batt. But the old ruffian ?

Oraz. Think of him to-morrow.

See, Venus rises in the softening heaven :
 Let not your eyes abuse her sacred beams,
 By looking through their gentleness on ought
 But lips, and eyes, and blushes of dear love.

Song.

Strike, you myrtle-crown'd boys,
 Ivied maidens, strike together :
 Magic lutes are these, whose noise
 Our fingers gather,
 Threaded thrice with golden strings
 From Cupid's bow ;
 And the sounds of its sweet voice
 Not air, but little busy things,
 Pinioned with the lightest feather
 Of his wings,
 Rising up at every blow
 Round the chords, like flies from roses
 Zephyr-touched ; so these light minions
 Hover round, then shut their pinions,
 And drop into the air, that closes
 Where music's sweetest sweet repose.

[*Exit ORAZIO with his retinue.*]

Marc. (solus). Then who hath solitude, like mine, that is not

The last survivor of a city's plague,
Eating the mess he cooked for his dead father?
Who is alone but I? there's fellowship
In churchyards and in hell: but I!—no lady's
ghost

Did ever cling with such a grasp of love
Unto its soft dear body, as I hung
Rooted upon this brother. I went forth
Joyfully, as the soul of one who closes
His pillowed eyes beside an unseen murderer,
And like its horrible return was mine,
To find the heart, wherein I breathed and beat,
Cold, gashed, and dead. Let me forget to love,
And take a heart of venom: let me make
A stair-case of the frightened breasts of men,
And climb into a lonely happiness!
And thou, who only art alone as I,
Great solitary god of that one sun,
I charge thee, by the likeness of our state,
Undo these human veins that tie me close
To other men, and let your servant griefs
Unmilk me of my mother, and pour in
Salt scorn and steaming hate!

Enter EZRIL.

Ezr. How now, my lord?

Marc. Much better, my kind Jew. They've
weeded out

A troublesome wild plant that grew upon me,
My heart: I've trampled it to dust, and wept it
Wetter than Nilus' side. Out of the sun!

And let him bake it to a winged snake.

—Well, you've been shouldered from the palace steps,

And spurned as I?—No matter.

Esr.

Nay, my lord !

Come with me : lay aside these squalid wrappings :

Prepare that honoured head to fit a crown,

For 'twill be empty of your brother soon.

Marc. What starry chance has dropped out of the skies ?

What's this ? Oh ! now if it should but be so,
I'll build a bridge to heaven. Tell me, good Jew ;
Excellent Ezril, speak.

Esr.

At your command

I sought the ducal palace, and, when there,

Found all the wild-eyed servants in the courts

Running about on some dismaying errand,

In the wild manner of a market crowd,

Waked, from the sunny dozing at their stalls,

By one who cries " the city is on fire ; "

Just so they crossed, and turned, and came again.

I asked of an old man, what this might mean ;

And he, yet grappling with the great disaster

As if he would have killed it, like a fable,

By unbelief, coldly, as if he spoke

Of something gone a century before,

Told me, the Duke in hunting had been thrown,

And lay on his last bed.

Marc.

Ha ! well ! what next ?

You are the cup-bearer of richest joy. —

But it was a report, a lie. — I have done —

I read it on your lip.

Esr.

It was too true.

I went to his bedside, and there made trial
Of my best skill in physic, with the zeal
Due to my sovereign.

Marc. Impious, meddling fool!
To thrust yourself 'twixt heaven and its victim!

Esr. My lord, I think you would not have
said so

In the sad chamber of the writhing man.
He lay in a red fever's quenchless flames,
Burning to dust: despairing of my skill,
I sat myself beside his heart, and spoke
Of his next brother. When he heard of you,
He bade be summoned all his counsellors,
To witness his bequeathing his dominion
Wholly to you.

Marc. Why did you let me wait?
Come, let's be quick: he keeps beneath his pillow
A kingdom, which they'll steal if we're too late.
We must o'ertake his death. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE II.

A saloon in ORAZIO'S palace, brilliantly lighted: at the bottom of the stage open folding-doors, through which a banqueting-room is seen, with a table, at which ORAZIO and his guests, feasting, are partially visible.

Music and Song.

Will you sleep these dark hours, maiden,
Beneath the vine that rested

Its slender boughs, so purple-laden,
 All the day around that elm
 In the mead, nightingale-nested,
 Which yon dark hill wears for an helm,
 Pasture-robed and forest-crested ?
 There the night of lovely hue
 Peeps the fearful branches through,
 And ends in those two eyes of blue.

ORAZIO and ARMIDA come forward.

Armida. What ! wrap a frown in myrtle, and
 look sad
 Beneath the shadow of an ivy wreath ?
 This should not be, my lord.

Oras. *Armida dear,*
 I'm weary of their laughter's empty din.
 Methinks, these fellows, with their ready jests,
 Are like to tedious bells, that ring alike
 Marriage or death. I would we were alone—
 Asleep, Armida.

Armida. They will soon be gone :
 One half-hour more—

Oras. No, it could not be so :—
 I think and think—Sweet, did you like the feast ?

Armida. Methought, 'twas gay enough.

Oras. *Now, I did not.*
 'Twas dull : all men spoke slow and emptily.
 Strange things were said by accident. Their
 tongues

Uttered wrong words : one fellow drank my death,
 Meaning my health ; another called for poison,
 Instead of wine ; and, as they spoke together,

Voices were heard, most loud, which no man owned :
 There were more shadows too than there were men ;
 And all the air more dark and thick than night
 Was heavy, as 'twere made of something more
 Than living breaths.—

Armida. Nay, you are ill, my lord :
 'Tis merely melancholy.

Oraz. There were deep hollows
 And pauses in their talk ; and then, again,
 On tale, and song, and jest, and laughter rang,
 Like a fiend's gallop. By my ghost, 'tis strange.—

Armida. Come, my lord, join your guests ; they
 look with wonder
 Upon your lonely mood.

Oraz. It is the trick
 Of these last livers to unbuild belief :
 They'd rob the world of spirit. Then each look,
 Ay, every aspect of the earth and sky,
 Man's thought and hope, are lies.—Well ; I'll return,
 And look at them again.

*[He approaches the door of the inner room :
 from which MICHELE advances.]*

Mich. You're tired, my lord.
 Our visit's long : break off, good gentlemen :
 The hour is late.

Oraz. Nay, I beseech you, stay :
 My pleasure grows on yours. I'm somewhat dull ;
 But let me not infect you.

*[Exeunt MICHELE and ARMIDA through the
 folding door : ORAZIO is following them, but
 is stopped by the entry of an Attendant,
 from the side.]*

What with you ?

Attend. A lady, in the garment of a nun,
Desires to see you.

Oraz. Lead her in : all such
I thank for their fair countenance.

*Enter VALERIA, introduced by Attendant, who
withdraws.*

Gentle stranger,

Your will with me?

Valer. I am the bearer of another's will :
A woman, whose unhappy fondness yet
May trouble her lord's memory,—Valeria,—
Your's for a brief, blessed time, who now dwells
In her abandoned being patiently,
But not unsorrowing, sends me.

Oraz. My wronged wife !
Too purely good for such a man as I am !
If she remembers me, then Heaven does too,
And I am not yet lost. Give me her thoughts,—
Ay, the same words she put into thine ears,
Safe and entire, and I will thank thy lips
With my heart's thanks. But tell me how she
fares.

Valer. Well ; though the common eye, that has
a tear,
Would drop it for the paleness of her skin,
And the wan shivering of her torch of life ;
Though she be faint and weak, yet very well :
For not the tincture, or the strength of limb,
Is a true health, but readiness to die.—
But let her be, or be not.—

Oraz. Best of ladies !
And, if thy virtues did not glut the mind,

To the extinction of the eye's desire,
Such a delight to see, that one would think
Our looks were thrown away on meaner things,
And given to rest on thee !

Valer. These words, my lord,
Are charitable ; it is very kind
To think of her sometimes : for, day and night,
As they flow in and out of one another,
She sits beside and gazes on their streams,
So filled with the strong memory of you,
That all her outward form is penetrated,
Until the watery portrait is become
Not hers, but yours :—and so she is content
To wear her time out.

Oraz. Softest peace enwrap her !
Content be still the breathing of her lips !
Be tranquil ever, thou blest life of her !
And that last hour, that hangs 'tween heaven and
earth,
So often travelled by her thoughts and prayers,
Be soft and yielding 'twixt her spirit's wings !

Valer. Think'st thou, Orazio, that she dies but
once ?
All round and through the spaces of creation,
No hiding-place of the least air, or earth,
Or sea, invisible, untrod, unrained on,
Contains a thing alone. Not e'en the bird,
That can go up the labyrinthine winds
Between its pinions, and pursues the summer,—
Not even the great serpent of the billows,
Who winds him thrice around this planet's waist,—
Is by itself, in joy or suffering.
But she whom you have ta'en, and, like a leaven,

With your existence kneaded, must be ever
Another—scarce another—self of thine.

Oraz. If she has read her heart aloud to you,
Or you have found it open by some chance,
Tell me, dear lady, is my name among
Her paged secrets? does she, can she love me?—
No, no; that's mad:—does she remember me?

Valer. She breathes away her weary days and
nights
Among cold, hard-eyed men, and hides behind
A quiet face of woe: but there are things,—
A song, a face, a picture, or a word,—
Which, by some semblance, touch her heart to
tears.

And music, starting up among the strings
Of a wind-shaken harp, undoes her secrecy,—
Rolls back her life to the first starry hour
Whose flower-fed air you used, to speak of love;
And then she longs to throw her bursting breast,
And shut out sorrow with Orazio's arms,—
Thus,—O my husband!

Oraz. Sweetest, sweetest woman!
Valeria, thou dost squeeze eternity
Into this drop of joy. O come, come, come!
Let us not speak;—give me my wife again!—
O thou fair creature, full of my own soul!
We'll love, we'll love, like nothing under heaven,
Like nought but Love, the very truest god.
Here's lip-room on thy cheek:—there, shut thine
eye,

And let me come, like sleep, and kiss its lid.
Again.—What shall I do? I speak all wrong,
And lose a soul-full of delicious thought

By talking.—Hush ! Let's drink each other up
By silent eyes. Who lives, but thou and I,
My heavenly wife ?

Valer. Dear Orazio !

Oraz. I'll watch thee thus, till I can tell a second
By thy cheek's change. O what a rich delight !
There's something very gentle in thy cheek,
That I have never seen in other women :
And, now I know the circle of thine eye,
It is a colour like to nothing else
But what it means,—that's heaven. This little tress,
Thou'lt give it me to look on and to wear,
But first I'll kiss its shadow on thy brow.
That little, fluttering dimple is too late,
If he is for the honey of thy looks :
As sweet a blush, as ever rose did copy,
Budded and opened underneath my lips,
And shed its leaves ; and now those fairest cheeks
Are snowed upon them. Let us whisper, sweet,
And nothing be between our lips and ears
But our own secret souls. —

[*A horn without.*

Valer. Heaven of the blest, they're here !

Oraz. Who, what, Valeria ?

Thou'rt pale and tremblest : what is it ?

Valer. Alas !

A bitter kernel to our taste of joy,
Our foolish and forgetful joy. My father !
Destruction, misery —

Enter VARINI and attendants.

Varin. Turn out those slaves, —

Hurst the closed doors, and occupy the towers. —

Oraz. Varini's self! what can his visit bring!

Valer. Look there; he's walking hither like a man,

But is indeed a sea of stormy ruin,
Filling and flooding o'er this golden house
From base to pinnacle, swallowing thy lands,
Thy gold, thine all.—Embrace me into thee,
Or he'll divide us.

Oraz. Never! calm thyself.—
Now, Count Varini, what's your business here?
If as a guest, though uninvited, welcome!
If not, then say, what else?

Varin. A master, spendthrift!
Open those further doors,—

Oraz. What? in my palace!

Varin. Thine! what is thine beneath the night
or day?

Not e'en that beggar's carcase,—for within that
The swinish devils of filthy luxury
Do make their sty.—No lands, no farms, no
houses,—
Thanks to thy debts, no gold. Go out! Thou'rt
nothing,

Besides a grave and a deep hell.

Valer. Orazio,
Thou hast Valeria: the world may shake thee off,
But thou wilt drop into this breast, this love,—
And it shall hold thee.

Oraz. What? lost already!
O that curst steward! I have fallen, Valeria,
Deeper than Lucifer, though ne'er so high,—
Into a place made underneath all things,
So low and horrible that hell's its heaven.

Varin. Thou shalt not have the idiot, though
she be

The very fool and sickness of my blood.—
Gentlemen, here are warrants for my act,—
His debts, bonds, forfeitures, taxes and fines,
O'erbalancing the worth of his estates,
Which I have bought : behold them !—For the
girl,

Abandoned, after marriage, by the villain,—
I am her father : let her be removed ;
And, if the justice of my rightful cause
Ally you not, at least do not resist me.

Mich. What are these writings ?

Batt. Bills under the Duke's seal,
All true and valid.—Poor Orazio !

Oraz. Why, the rogue pities me ! I'm down
indeed.

Valer. Help me ! Oh ! some of you have been
beloved,
Some must be married.—Will you let me go ?
Will you stand frozen there, and see them cut
Two hearts asunder ?—Then you will,—you do.—
Are all men like my father ? are all fathers
So far away from men ? or all their sons
So heartless ?—you are women, as I am ;
Then pity me, as I would pity you,
And pray for me ! Father ! ladies ! friends !—
But you are tearless as the desert sands.—
Orazio, love me ! or, if thou wilt not,
Yet I will love thee : that you cannot help.

Oraz. My best Valeria ! never shalt thou leave
me,
But with my life. O that I could put on

These feeble arms the proud and tawny strength
Of the lion in my heart !

Varin. Out with the girl at once !

Rosaur. Forgive them, sir, we all of us beseech.

Varin. Lady, among you all she's but one sire,
And he says *no*.—Away !

Valer. Have pity, my sweet father ! my good
father !

Have pity, as my gentle mother would,
Were she alive,—thy sainted wife ! O pardon,
If I do wish you had been rent asunder,
Thus dreadfully ; for then I had not been ;—
Not kissed and wept upon my father's hand,
And he denied me !—you can make me wretched :—
Be cruel still, but I will never hate you.—
Orazio, I'll tell thee what it is :
The world is dry of love ; we've drunk it all
With our two hearts—

Oraz. Farewell, Valeria !

Take on thy last dear hand this truest kiss,
Which I have brought thee from my deepest soul.—
Farewell, my wife !—

Valer. They cannot part us long.—
What's life ? our love is an eternity :

() blessed hope ! [*She is forced out.*]

Oraz. Now then, sir ; speak to me :
The rest is sport,—like rain against a tower
Unpulsed by the ram. Go on : what's next ?

Varin. Your palaces are mine, your sheep-
specked pastures,
Forest and yellow corn-land, grove and desert,
Earth, water, wealth : all, that you yesterday
Were mountainously rich and golden with,

I, like an earthquake, in this minute take.
Go, go: I will not pick thee to the bones:
Starve as you will.

Oraz. How, sir! am I not wealthy?
Why, if the sun could melt the brazen man
That strode o'er Corinth, and whose giant form
Stretched its swart limbs along sea, island, moun-
tain,

While night appeared its shadow,—if *he* could,—
Great, burning Phœbus' self—could melt ought of
him,

Except the snow-drift on his rugged shoulder,
Thou hast destroyed *me*!

Varin. Thanks to these banquets of Olympus'
top

From whence you did o'erturn whole Niles of wine,
And made each day as rainy as that hour
When Perseus was begot, I have destroyed thee,
Or thou thyself; for, such a luxury
Would wring the gold out of its rocky shell,
And leave the world all hollow.—So, begone;
My lord, and beggar!

Batt. Noble, old Varinai,
Think, is it fit to crush into the dirt
Even the ruins of nobility?
Take comfort, sir.

Oraz. Who am I now?
How long is a man dying or being born?
Is't possible to be a king and beggar
In half a breath? or to begin a minute
I' th' west, and end it in the furthest east?
O no! I'll not believe you. When I do,
My heart will crack to powder.—Can you speak?

Then do : shout something louder than my thoughts,
For I begin to feel.

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. News from the court :
The Duke—

Oraz. My brother—speak—
Was he not ill, and on a perilous bed ?
Speak life and death,—thou hast them on thy
tongue,—
One's mine, the other his :—a look, a word,
A motion ;—life or death ?

Mess. The Duke is dead.

[*BATTISTA and the other guests kneel to ORAZIO.*

Batt. Then we salute in thee another sovereign.

Oraz. Me then, who just was shaken into chaos,
Thou hast created ! I have flown, somehow,
Upwards a thousands miles : my heart is crowned.—
Your hands, good gentlemen ; sweet ladies,
yours :—

And what new godson of the bony death,—
Of fire, or steel, or poison,—shall I make
For old Varini ?

Varin. Your allegiance, sirs,
Wanders : Orazio is a beggar still.

Batt. Is it not true then that the Duke is dead ?

Oraz. Not dead ? O slave !

Varin. The Duke is dead, my lords ;
And, on his death-bed, did bestow his crown
Upon his second brother, Lord Marcello,—
Ours, and Ferrara's, Duke.

Oraz. I'll not believe it :
Marcello is abroad.

Varin. His blest return,
This providential day, has saved our lives
From thine abhorred sway. *Orazio*, go :
And, though my clemency is half a crime,
I spare your person.

Oraz. I'll to the palace.
When we meet next, be blessed if thou dost kiss
The dust about my ducal chair. [*Exit.*]

Varin. I shall be there,
To cry Long live Marcello ! in thine ear.—
Pray pardon me the breaking of this feast,
Ladies,—and so, good-night.

Rosaur. Your wish is echoed by our inmost will :
Good-night to Count Varini. [*Exeunt guests.*]

Attend. My lord—

Varin. What are they, sirrah ?

Attend. The palace-keys.
There is a banquet in the inner room :
Shall we remove the plate ?

Varin. Leave it alone :
Wine in the cups, the spicy meats uncovered,
And the round lamps each with a star of flame
Upon their brink ; let winds begot on roses,
And grey with incense, rustle through the silk
And velvet curtains :—then set all the windows,
The doors and gates, wide open ; let the wolves,
Foxes, and owls, and snakes, come in and feast ;
Let the bats nestle in the golden bowls,
The shaggy brutes stretch on the velvet couches,
The serpent twine him o'er and o'er the harp's
Delicate chords :—to Night, and all its devils,
We do abandon this accursed house. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.

An apartment in Varini's palace.

Enter VALERIA and a Female Attendant.

Attend. Will you not sleep, dear lady? you are weary,

And yet thus eager, quick, and silently,
Like one who listens for a midnight sign,
You wander up and down from room to room,
With that wide, sightless eye,—searching about
For what you know not. Will you not to bed?

Valer. No, not to-night: my eyes will not be closed,

My heart will not be darkened. Sleep is a traitor:
He fills the poor, defenceless eyes with blackness,
That he may let in dreams. I am not well;
My body and my mind are ill-agreed,
And comfortlessly strange; faces and forms
And pictures, friendly to my life-long knowledge,
Look new and unacquainted,—every voice
Is hollow, every word inexplicable,—
And yet they seem to be a guilty riddle,—
And every place, though unknown as a desert,
Feels like the spot where a forgotten crime
Was done by me in sleep. Night, O be kind!
I do not come to watch thy secret acts,

Or thrust myself on Nature's mysteries
At this forbidden hour : bestow thy dew,
Thy calm, thy quiet sweetness, sacred mother,
And let me be at ease !

Now, thou kind girl,
Take thy pale cheeks to rest.

Attend. I am not weary :

Believe me now, I am not.

Valer. But, my child,

Those eyelids, tender as the leaf of spring,—
Those cheeks should lay their roseate delicacy
Under the kiss of night, the feathery sleep ;
For there are some, whose study of the morn
Is ever thy young countenance and hue.
Ah maid ! you love.

Attend. I'll not deny it, madam.

O that sweet influence of thoughts and looks !
That change of being, which, to one who lives,
Is nothing less divine than divine life
To the unmade ! Love ? Do I love ? I walk
Within the brilliance of another's thought,
As in a glory. I was dark before,
As Venus' chapel in the black of night :
But there was something holy in the darkness,
Softer and not so thick as other where ;
And, as rich moonlight may be to the blind,
Unconsciously consoling. Then love came,
Like the out-bursting of a trodden star,
And what before was hueless and unseen
Now shows me a divinity, like that
Which, raised to life out of the snowy rock,
Surpass'd mankind's creation, and repaid
Heaven for Pandora.

Valer. Innocently thought,
 And worthy of thy youth ! I should not say
 How thou art like the daisy in Noah's meadow,
 On which the foremost drop of rain fell warm
 And soft at evening ; so the little flower
 Wrapped up its leaves, and shut the treacherous
 water

Close to the golden welcome of its breast,—
 Delighting in the touch of that which led
 The shower of oceans, in whose billowy drops
 Tritons and lions of the sea were warring,
 And sometimes ships on fire sunk in the blood
 Of their own inmates ; others were of ice,
 And some had islands rooted in their waves,
 Beasts on their rocks, and forest-powdering winds,
 And showers tumbling on their tumbling self,—
 And every sea of every ruined star
 Was but a drop in the world-melting flood.—

Attend. Lady, you utter dreams.

Valer. Let me talk so :
 I would o'erwhelm myself with any thoughts ;
 Ay, hide in madness from the truth. Persuade me
 To hope that I am not a wretched woman,
 Who knows she has an husband by his absence,
 Who feels she has a father by his hate,
 And wakes and mourns, imprisoned in this house,
 The while she should be sleeping, mad, or dead. —
 Thou canst, and pity on thine eyelid hangs,
 Whose dewy silence drops consent,—thou wilt !
 I've seen thee smile with calm and gradual sweet-
 ness,
 As none, that were not good, could light their
 cheeks :—

Thou wilt assist me. Harden not those lips,
Those lovely kissings let them not be stone
With a denial !

Attend. But your father's anger,—
The watchful faith of all the servants—

Valer. Fear not :
Lend me thy help. O come,—I see thou wilt.—
Husband, I'll lay me on thine aching breast
For once and ever.—Haste ! for see, the light
Creates for earth its day once more, and lays
The star of morn's foundation in the east.
Come—come— [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Place before the ducal palace.

Guards driving ORAZIO from the gate.

Guard. Back ! desperate man : you cannot
pass —

Oraz. By heaven, I must and will :—

Guard. By the Duke's order,
The gates are locked on all to-day.

Oraz. By mine,
By the Duke's brother's order, or his force,
Open at once yon gates. Slave, by my blood,
But that I think thou know'st me not, I'd make
That corpse of thine my path. Undo, I say,
The knitting of this rebel house's arms,
And let their iron welcome be around me.
My sword is hungry : do't.

Guard. Advance no further :

Another step, and all our swords shake hands
Within your breast.

Oraz. Insolent worm of earth,
To earth and worms for this! [*He draws his sword.*]

Guard. Strike all! strike strong!
Strike through him right. [*They fight.*]

Enter EZRIL from the palace.

Esr. Peace, on your lives, you traitors!
What! would you stain the holy throne of justice,
The pure and peaceful temple of the law,
The sacred dwelling of Ferrara's soul,
With the foul juices of your drunken veins?
Put up your impious swords.

Guard. Pardon our hasty and forgetful choler.
We but defend our Duke against the outrage
Of this intemperate brawler.

Oraz. Cut him to shreds and fling him to the
dogs.—

You wait upon the Duke, sir?

Esr. I am one
Of Lord Marcello's followers.

Oraz. Pray you then,
Speak to your Lord Marcello: let him know
These house-dogs, these his ducal latch-holders
Dare keep the bolt against his brother's knock.

Esr. Are you then—?

Oraz. I am Lord Orazio.—
Be quick!—O nature, what a snail of men!
The morn is frosty, sir: I love not waiting.—

Esr. Now all the mercy of the heavens forbid
That thou should'st be that rash and wretched
neighbour

Of the Duke's crown, his brother !

Oraz. Marcello is my brother ; I am his ;
If coming of one mother brother us :
He is the Duke, and I Orazio ;
He elder, younger I.—If Jove and Neptune,
And the third Pluto, being Saturn's boys,
Lying in Rheas' womb and on her breast,
Were therefore brethren, so are he and I,—
Marcello's mother's son, his grandame's grandson,
Marcello's father's babe, his uncle's nephew,
His nephew's uncle, brother of his brother,
Or what you like,—if this same word of brother
Sours the sore palate of a royal ear.

Ezr. Better thou wert the brother of his foe
Than what thou art, a man of the same getting ;
As, out of the same lump of sunny Nile,
Rises a purple-wingèd butterfly,
And a cursed serpent crawls.

Oraz. Heart-withered, pale-scalped grandfather
of lies !
Age-hidden monster ! Tell me what thou meanest,
And then I'll stab thee for thy falsehood.—

Ezr. Hold him !
Your swords between us !—Now, the Duke con-
demns thee ;
And by his mother's, and his father's grave,
And by the dead, that lies within this palace,
His brother's sacred corpse, he dreadly swears ;
And by the heaven those three loved souls
Dwell and are blest in, twice he dreadly swears :
By which dread oath, and hate of all thy crimes,
The Duke condemns thee,—mixing in his sen-
tence,

Sweet mercy, tearful love, and justice stern,—
To banishment for ever from this hour.

Oraz. O reddest hour of wrath and cruelty !
Banished !—Why not to death ?

Ezr. The pious hope,
That bitter solitude and suffering thought
Will introduce repentance to thy woes,
And that conduct thee to religious fear
And humbleness, the lark that climbs heaven's stairs
But lives upon the ground :—Go forth, *Orazio* ;
Seek not the house or converse of a citizen,
But think thyself outside the walls of life :
If in Ferrara, after this decree,
Your darkest, deepest, and most fearful fear
Falls on thy shoulder, digs beneath thy feet,
And opens hell for thee.—So, pass away !

Oraz. Stay, for an instant ; listen to a word :
O lead me to his throne ! Let me but look
Upon the father in my brother's face !
Let me but speak to him this kindred voice,
Our boyish thoughts in the familiar words,
Of our one bed-room ; let me show to him
That picture which contains our double childhood,
Embracing in inexplicable love,
Within each other's, in our mother's, arms ;
Thou'lt see rejoicing, O thou good old man,
The rigour melting through his changed eyes
Off his heart's roots, between whose inmost folds
Our love is kept.

Ezr. Impossible and vain !
Content thee with thy doom, and look for love
Over the sea-wide grave. Let us be gone !
[Exit with guards]

Oraz. Let me write to him,—send a message to him,—

A word, a touch, a token ! old, benevolent ~~man~~ ^{friend} !
 Stay with me then to comfort and advise :
 Leave one of these beside me : throw me not
 Alone into despair !—He's gone ; they're gone ;
 They never will come back ; ne'er shall I hear
 The sweet voice of my kinsmen or my friends :
 But here begins the solitude of death.
 I was,—I am ; O what a century
 Of darkness, rocks, and ghostly tempests opens
 Between those thoughts ! Within it there are lost
 Dearest Valeria,—Marcello, whose heart came
 From the same place as mine,—and all mankind ;
 Affection, charity, joy : and nothing's cast
 Upon this barren rock of present time,
 Except Orazio's wreck I here lit it lie.

[Throws himself down.]

Enter VARINI and attendants.

Varin. Not in the city ? Have you asked the
 guards

At bridge and gate,—the palace sentinels ?

Attend. We have,—in vain : they have not seen
 her pass.

Varin. And did you say Valeria,—my Valeria,—
 Heaven's love,—earth's beauty ?

Oraz. (starting up). Mine eternally !

Let heaven unscauld each star-hilted lightning,
 And clench ten thousand hands at once against
 me,—

Earth shake all graves to one, and rive itself
 From Lybia to the North ! in spite of all

That threatens, I will stun the adulterous gods,—
 She's mine ! Valeria's mine ! dash me to death,—
 From death to the eternal depth of fire,—
 I laugh and triumph on the neck of fate :
 For still she's mine for ever ! give me her,
 Or I will drag thee to a sea-side rock,
 That breaks the bottoms of the thunder-clouds,
 And taking thee by this old, wicked hair,
 Swing thee into the winds.—

Varin. I would, wild man,
 That I could quench thine eyes' mad thirst with her.
 She's gone, fled, lost. O think not any more—
 Let us forget what else is possible,—
 Yea hope impossibly ! the city streets,
 The quay, the gardens,—is there yet a place
 Within night's skirt unsearched ?

Oraz. The wood of wolves :—

Varin. Merciful god ! that frightful forest grows
 Under the darksome corner of the sky
 Where death's scythe hangs : its murder-shading
 trees

Are hairs upon Hell's brow. Away : away !
 And never dare to turn on me again
 Those eyes, unfilled with—speak to me never,
 Until you cry—"Behold Valeria !"
 And drop her on my bosom.

Oraz. We'll wind the gordian paths off the trees'
 roots,
 Untie the hilly mazes, and seek her
 Till we are lost. Help, ho ! [*Exit with attendants.*]

Varin. Blessings of mine
 Feather your speed ! and my strong prayers make
 breaches

Through the air before you.

[He sits down on the palace-step.

Now I'll close my eyes,
And, seated on this step, await their coming.
Strange and delightful meetings, on strange lands,
Of dead-esteemed friends have happened oft,
And such a blessed and benevolent chance
Might bring her here unheard ; for on the earth
She goes with her light feet, still as the sparrow
Over the air, or through the grass its shade.
Behind me would she steal, unknown, until
Her lip fell upon mine. It might be so :
I'll wait awhile, and hope it.

Enter VALERIA.

Valer. I know not what it means. None speak
to me :

The crowded street, and solid flow of men,
Dissolves before my shadow and is broken.
I pass unnoticed, though they search for me,
As I were in the air and indistinct
As crystal in a wave. There lies a man :—
Shall I intreat protection and concealment,
And thaw the pity of his wintry head ?
—No time : they come like arrows after me :—
I must avoid them. *[Exit.*

Enter EZRIL and attendants.

Esr. Pursue, o'ertake, stay, seize that hurrying
girl :

Muffle her face and form, and through the bye-ways
Convey her to the palace. Hasten, hounds !

[Exeunt.

Varin. Thou magical deceiver, precious Fancy!
 Even now, out of this solitude and silence,
 Seemed,—it was thy creation,—music flowing,
 And a conviction of some unseen influence;
 I could have pointed to that empty spot,
 And said, there stands the presence of my daughter!
 The air seemed shaken by that voice of hers,—
 But 'tis all hushed. [*Some of his attendants return.*]
 How now? speak some of you.

What's here?

Attend. A veil and mantle.—

Varin. Both Valeria's!
 Where's she they should have wrapped?

Attend. 'Twas all we found.

Varin. Where?

Attend. On the grass this purple cloak was
 dropped,
 Beside the river.

Varin. And the veil,—which way?
 Further on shore, or near those deadly waves?

Attend. The veil, my lord,—

Varin. 'Tis drenched and dropping wet:
 Would I were drowned beside her! thou wert
 white;

And thy limbs' wond'rous victory over snow
 Did make the billows thirsty to possess them.
 They drank thee up, thou sweet one, cruelly!
 Who was in heaven then?

*Enter ORAZIO and attendants, bearing a corpse
 that is carried up the stage.*

Oras. My love, art dead?
 Wilt thou not ope thy lips, lift up thine eyes?

It is the air, the sun—

Attend. (to Varini). We've found the corpse.

Oraz. Her corpse ! O no ! she is Valeria still :
She's scarce done living yet : her ghost's the
youngest !

To-morrow, she'll be—Oh what *she* will be ?

No she,—a corpse, and then—a skeleton !—

Varin. Hast looked upon her ?

Attend. Death has marred her features, --
So swollen and discoloured their delight,
As if he feared that Life should know her sweet one,
And take her back again.

Varin. If it be so,
I'll see her once : that beauty being gone,
And the familiar tokens altered quite,
She's strange,—a being made by wicked Death,
And I'll not mourn her. Lead me to the corpse.

[*Exit with attendants.*]

Oraz. Henceforth, thou tender pity of mankind,
Have nought to do with weeping : let war's eyes
Sweat with delight ; and tears be ta'en from grief,
And thrown upon the rocky cheek of hate !
For mark ! that water, the soft heap of drops,—
Water, that feigns to come from very heaven
In the round shape of sorrow,—that was wont to
wash

Sin from the new-born babe, is hard and bloody :
A murderer of youth ; cold death to those
Whose life approved thy godhead, piteous virtue !

Enter EZRIE and guards.

Ezr. Here still, unhappy man ? then take the
doom

You woo so obstinately.—To the dungeon,—
To the deepest chamber of the dayless rock :
Away, and down with him !

Oraz. I care not whither.
Thou canst not drag me deeper, wrap me darker,
Or torture me as my own thoughts have done.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A room in the ducal palace.

MARCELLO *alone.*

Marc. I have them all at last ; swan-necked
Obedience ;
And Power that strides across the muttering people,
Like a tall bridge ; and War, the spear-maned
dragon :—
Such are the potent spirits he commands,
Who sits within the circle of a crown !
Methought that love began at woman's eye :
But thou, bright imitation of the sun,
Kindlest the frosty mould around my heart-roots,
And, breathing through the branches of my veins,
Makest each azure tendril of them blossom
Deep, tingling pleasures, musically hinged,
Dropping with starry sparks, goldenly honied,
And smelling sweet with the delights of life.
At length I am Marcello.

Enter EZRIL.

Esr. Mighty Duke,
Ferrara's nobles wait on you, to proffer
The homage of their coronets.

Marc. I shall not see them.

Esr. It was the ancient usage of the state,
In every age.—

Marc. Henceforth, be it forgotten !
I will not let the rabble's daily sight
Be my look's playmate. Say unto them, Ezril,
Their sovereigns of foretime were utter men,
False gods, that beat an highway in their thoughts
Before my car ; idols of monarchy,
Whose forms they might behold. Now I am come,
Be it enough that they are taught my name,
Permitted to adore it, swear and pray
In it and to it : for the rest I wrap
The pillared caverns of my palace round me,
Like to a cloud, and rule invisibly
On the god-shouldering summit of mankind.
Dismiss them so.

Esr. 'Tis dangerous,—

Marc. Begone !
Each minute of man's safety he does walk
A bridge, no thicker than his frozen breath,
O'er a precipitous and craggy danger
Yawning to death ! [*Exit EZRIL.*]

A perilous sea it is,
'Twixt this and Jove's throne, whose tumultuous
waves
Are heaped, contending ghosts ! There is no passing,
But by those slippery, distant stepping-stones,

Which frozen Odin trod, and Mahomet,
 With victories harnessed to his crescent sledge,
 And building waves of blood upon the shallows,
 O'erpassed triumphant : first a pile of thrones
 And broken nations, then the knees of men,
 From whence, to catch the lowest root of heaven,
 We must embrace the winged waist of fame,
 Or nest within opinion's palmy top
 'Till it has mixed its leaves with Atlas' hair,
 Quicker to grow than were the men of Cadmus—

Re-enter EZRII.

Ezr. They are departing, with the unequal pace
 Of discontent and wonder.

Marc. Send them home
 To talk it with their wives : sow them with looks
 Of midnight marvels, witcheries, and visions :
 Let the unshaven Nazarite of stars
 Unbind his wondrous locks, and grandame's earth-
 quake
 Drop its wide jaw ; and let the church-yard's sleep
 Whisper out goblins. When the fools are ripe
 And gaping to the kernel, thou shalt steal,
 And lay the egg of my divinity
 In their fermenting sides.—Where is my brother ?
 The first I'll aim at.

Ezr. 'Mid the poisonous dregs of this deep
 building,
 Two days and their two nights have had his breath
 All of one colour to his darkened eyes.
 No voice has fed his ears, and little food
 His speech-robbed lips.

Marc. 'Tis well. This is a man

Whose state has sunk i' th' middle of his thoughts :
 And in their hilly shade, as in a vale,
 I'll build my church, making his heart the quarry.
 Take him his meal, and place a guard around
 The wood below : the rest of my instructions,
 For we must juggle boldly, shall be whispered
 Secretly in my closet.

Esr. Will you not

First cast this ragged and unseemly garb,
 And hang your sides with purple?

Marc. No : these rags

Give my delight a sting. I'll sit in them ;
 And, when I've stretched my dukedom through
 men's souls,

Fix on its shore my chair, and from it bid
 Their doubts lie down.—Wilt help me?

Esr. Duke, thou art

A fathomless and undiscovered man,
 Thinking above the eagle's highest wings,
 And underneath the world. Go on : command :
 And I am thine to do. *[Exit.*

SCENE II.

*A dungeon of Cyclopean architecture : ORAZIO
 lying on the ground.*

Orav. I'll speak again :

This rocky wall's great silence frightens me,
 Like a dead giant's.

Methought I heard a sound : but all is still.

Marc. Excellent Ezril !

Thanks, thanks : my gratitude is snail-paced slow,
So heavy is its burthen.—See'st thou yonder?

Ezz. The husband: where his sorrow, strong
in error,
Has spurned him down.

Marc. I'll raise the broken man :
Ay, I will place my feet upon his soul,
And weigh him up.—Leave us alone, good Ezril.—

[Exit EZRIL.]

Lie there : I see the winding, darkening path
Into thine heart, its mouth and its recess,
As clear as if it were a forest's cavern,
Open to my approach. Henceforth be thou
Another habitation of my life,
Its temple, its Olympus, next in birth to,
And pressing close beneath the unknown cloud
In which it reigns !

Ho ! sleep'st thou here ?
Mak'st thou the branch-dividing, light noon-air
Thy bed-room ? Rise ! what dost thou on the
ground ?

Oras. Didst thou say, Rise? I stand. Where
am I now,
And how?

Marc. Alive, and in Ferrara.

Oras. Why, first there is a life, and then a death,
And then a life again, whose roof is death ;
So I have heard. 'Tis true : and though I am
Beside you, there's a grave divides our beings,
Which is the second gate of birth to me.—
Leave me to weep and groan.

Marc. What ails thee thus?

I've passed through life's best feelings ;—they are
her's ;

Humanity's behind me. Ne'er I'll turn,
But, consecrated to this holy grief,
Live in her memory : heaven has no more.

Marc. Yes, *she* is there. Let not thy woes be
impious,

Lest ye should never meet ; but anchor thee
On the remembrance that thou there wilt meet
Her deepest self, her spirit.

Oraz. Thou talk'st to me of spirits and of souls :—
What are they ? what know I or you of them ?
I love no ghost : I love the fairest woman,
With too much warmth and beauty in her cheek,
And gracious limbs, to hold together long.
To-day she's cold and breathless, and to-morrow
They'll lay her in the earth ; there she will crumble :
Another year no place in all the world,
But this poor heart, will know of her existence.
Can she come back, () can she ever be
The same she was last night in my embrace ?
No comfort else, no life !

Marc. She can.

Oraz. What didst thou speak ?
Blaspheme not nature : wake not hope to stab it :
O take not comfort's sacred name in vain !
Wilt say it now again ?

Marc. There is a way,
Which, if thy heart's religion could permit,—

Oraz. What's that but she ? Do it, whate'er it is ;
I take the sin to me. Come, what will come,—
And what but pain can come ?—for that will be
All paradise concentrate in a minute,

When she,—but she is dead ; I saw her corpse ;—
Upon my soul thou liest unfathomably :
No god could do it.

Marc. I have earned the taunt.
Seven heavens do fold the secret from thine eye :
Be happily incredulous. Perchance
It were a cursèd and unhallowed rite :
Let's think it all a fiction. So farewell !

Oraz. Thou dost not go ; thou shalt not leave
me thus :

No ; by the power thou speakest of, I do swear
It shall be tried : if unsuccessful, then
We shall be what we are.

Marc. Not its success
I doubt, but its impiety. O be quick
To fear perdition !

Oraz. Can I fear aught further
Than what I feel ?

Marc. The sting of grief speaks here,
And not the tongue of thought. A month, a year
Pass in reflection : after such a time,
If thou demand'st the same, I'll then assist thee.

Oraz. What ? dost thou think I'll live another
month

Without her ? No. I did not seek this knowledge.
Thou hast created hope, unbidden, in me ;
Therefore, I charge thee, let it not be killed !
I pray not, I beseech thee not, again ;
But I command thee, by my right to bliss,
Which I have lost in trusting thee, to do it,
Without an instant's loss.

Marc. Must it be so ?
To-morrow night in the Cathedral vault

Valeria will be buried : meet me there.

Oraz. Thou wilt not fail ?

Marc. I will not, on my life.

Oraz. Then she is mine again,
All and for ever.

Marc. (aside). As thou shalt be mine.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The Campo Santo. Night.

Enter MARCELLO, FZRII, and MELCHIOR leading VALERIA.

Valer. Whither, and by what law of man or nature,
Do ye thus lead me ? Awe of sacred justice,
I dread of the clenched punishment that follows
The tremulous shoulder of pale, muffled guilt,—
Do they not gaze from every silent bed
In this sad place ?

Melch. Sheathe that nurse's tongue.
There's wooing 'twixt the moon and Death to-night :
This is his cabinet.

Marc. 'Beseech you, lady,
Break not this still submission, and so force us
To stir our power from 'ts feigned, complacent
sleep.

Valer. Force ! dost thou know me, that thou threaten'st force ?

Melch. Why, thou'rt some wealthy sinner, very like,
Whose gloves are worn with lips of richest princes :—

It recks not here. The unfashionable worm,
Respectless of the crown-illumined brow,
The cheek's bewitchment, or the sceptred clench,
With no more eyes than Love, creeps courtier-like,
On his thin belly, to his food,—no matter
How clad or nicknamed it might strut above,
What age or sex,—it is his dinner-time.
—Now with what name, what coronal's shade,
wilt scare

Our rigour to the wing ?

Valer. I have a plea,
As dewy-piteous as the gentle ghost's
That sits alone upon a forest-grave,
Thinking of no revenge : I have a mandate,
As magical and potent as e'er ran
Silently through a battle's myriad veins,
Undid their fingers from the hanging steel,
And drew them up in prayer : I AM A WOMAN.
O motherly remembered be the name,
And, with the thought of loves and sisters, sweet
And comforting ! therefore be piteous to me.
O let my hand touch yours ! I could do more
By its sad tremors than my tongue.

Melch. Away !
We own a mood of marble. There's no earth
In any crevice of my well-built spirit,
Whence woman's rain could wake the weedy leaves

Of the eye-poison, pity.

Marc.

If I were

Another man than this, Nature's cast child,
Renounced by Life and Death of common men,
And placed by wrongs upon an island-peak,
Methinks I could relent.

Melch.

Draw up thyself.

This bearskin, charity, is a great coat
For ragged, shivering sin : thine Indian hate,
That shivers, like the serpent's noontide tongue,
With poisonous, candid heat, must trample on it.

Valer. O icy hearts ! but no ; soft ice doth melt,
And warms contritely ;—I renounce the words,
And roll away the tender side of Heaven
To bare its lightnings. I am innocent,—
As white as any angel's lily wing ;
And if you wrong me, mark ! I will not weep,
Nor pray against your souls, nor curse your lives,
Nor let my madness wake all things that are
To roll destruction on you,—but be silent,
Secret, as happiness, to man and God,
And let the judgment ripen silently,
Under your feet and o'er you,—mighty, quiet,
Deadly and tedious, as a silent hell.
Now, what ye dare, begin !

Marc.

Our purpose glides,

Calm and remorseless as this human orb,
Whose moon, thou see'st, bestows an equal beam
Upon the odorous gardens we passed by,
And the gaunt lips of this new-opened grave.
Canst thou reproach our want of charity,
Beholding this, and all the thoughts it lends ?

Melch. 'Tis a fit oracle for such an hour,

And has the caverns of its inspirations,
 More true than Delphian, underneath our being.
 Let's speak to it.

Esr. What would'st thou?

Melch. It may teach

This tremulous lady resignation, sir.—

Ho, there! thou maker of this earthen bed;

Thou porter of the gates, art thou below?

Whose grave is this thou digg'st?

* * * * *

SCENE II.

Enter EZRIL dragged in by two Venetians.

Esr. Help! help, you kindly people of this
 place!

Help for the helpless old! Have mercy, sirs!

Oh! it is in your hearts, deny it not;

Shut not your ears to its enchanting tongue.

It will unlock a heaven in your souls,

Wherein my pardon and my pity sits.

I kneel to you, as you unto your god:

Reject me not, teach him not cruelty.

Be heavenly, as you can.

1st Venet. Hush! frosty Jew!

Or take my answer from this tongue of steel.

Esr. When you are old, and fearful,
 With age's wintry winds shaking your limbs,
 Thus may you cry, thus may you wring your hands,—

1st Venet. And thus be struck. Once more
have silence with thee,
Or death possess me if I stab thee not.
Now comrade, shall we let the coward live?

2nd Venet. Wilt thou betray us, dotard?

Ezr. By my life,
If you will grant me it to swear upon,
Never!

1st Venet. It is a rubbed and brittle oath,
As what 'tis sworn: break one, thou breakest both.
I'll snap thy being like a frozen breath,
If thou breathest falsely.

Ezr. If I kill my truth,
Drive thy revenge into my midmost heart.

1st Venet. Hark, once again! Where wert thou
journeying, Jew,
With gold-stuffed panniers, thus?

Ezr. To Venice town.—
Alas! remind me not of my dear riches,
The beauteous jewels of my bosom; take them.—
I would that I were stouter in my soul,
That I dared die!—Be gentle with the sacks;
They're full of fair, white silver: as I tied them,
I felt their strings run tickling through my veins.

1st Venet. O ho! here's royal booty, on my soul:
A draught of ducats! By this silver sight
I love thee, bushy dog, and thou shalt live
To sweep the corners of men's souls again.
Be comforted. Let's toss them on our shoulders,
And swim the Po.

2nd Venet. First, look you here, old man:
There's a clenched hand; dost see?

Ezr. 'Tis hard as iron:

(*Aside*) Hell melt it so !

2nd Venet. And in't a sword : —

Ezr. (aside). As sharp as are the teeth
Of my heart's father, a fierce curse of thee. —
What then, sir ?

2nd Venet. Speak once of us,
Look after us, or press that foot of thine
Upon yon lip of Po, where Venice grows, —
They're in thy muddy body to the wrist.

[*Exeunt Venetians.*]

Ezr. The weight of Atlas' shoulder slip upon you !
The waves smile, do they ? O, that they would
laugh,

Open their liquid jaws and shut them on you !
These are but thieves, the emptiers of my soul, —
These, that have scooped away my sweetest kernel,
My gathered seed of kingdom-shading wealth,
Crown-blossomed, sword-leaved, trunked with
struggling armies,

And left the wrinkled skin upon my arms, —
These are but thieves ! And he that steals the
blood,

A murderer is he ? Oh ! my thoughts are blunt : —
I'll throw away the workings of my tongue,
Till I've the craft to make a curse so long,
Fangish enough to reach the quick of earth,
That hell whose flaming name my feelings echo,
And rouse it for them.

Death ! here comes a man
To stare into my ruin.

Enter MARCELLO.

Marc. Hail, country of my birth !

We're met in season ; winter in us both,
The fruit picked from us, poor and snowy-scalped,
And almost solitary. I did turn
An ermined shoulder on thee, when I stepped
Out of thine airy door of earth and sky,
Upon that watery threshold ;
And now I face thee with a ragged front :
A coin of Fate's cross-stamp, that side a Duke,
And this, which Time turns up, (so hell might stick
Upon the back of heaven,) a scratched despair !

* * * * *





TORRISMOND.



PERSONS REPRESENTED.

DUKE OF FERRARA.

TORRISMOND; *his son.*

The Marquis MALASPINA.

CYRANO; *his son.*

AMADEUS; *a young nobleman.*

GARCIA; }
GOMEZ; } *Duke's servants.*
ORAN; }

MELCHIOR; }
GAUDENTIO; } *Courtiers.*

VERONICA.

ELVIRA; *a toad-eater.*

ERMINIA; *Oran's sister.*

SCENE : Ferrara.



TORRISMOND.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An apartment in the ducal palace.

Enter the DUKE, Courtiers, and attendants.

Duke.

WHO has seen Torrismond, my son, to-night?

Garcia. My lord, he has not crossed me, all the day.

(To Gomez aside.) You need not say we saw him pass the terrace,

All red and hot with wine. The duke is angry :
Mark how he plucks his robe.

Duke.

Gomez, nor you?

Gomez. Your Grace, in Garcia's answer
Beheld the face of mine. I have not lent him
A word to-day.

Duke.

Nor you? none of you, sirs?—
No answer ! have ye sold yourselves to silence ?
Is there not breath, or tongue, or mouth among
you,

Enough to croak a curse?—Nay: there's no wonder.

Why do I ask? that know you are his curs,
His echo-birds, the mirrors of his tongue.
He has locked up this answer in your throats,
And scratched it on your leaden memories.
What do I ask for? well: go on, go on;
Be his sop-oracles, and suck yellow truth
Out of the nipple of his jingling pouch.
But tell me this, dogs, that do wag your tails
Round this dwarf Mercury, this gilded Lie-god,
Will you set out and beg with him to-morrow?

Garcia. Why, my good lord?

Duke. Because, my evil slave,—

Because unless he can these sunbeams coin,
Or, like a bee in metals, suck me out
The golden honey from their marly core,
He's like to board with theameleon:
Because I will untie him from my heart,
And drop him to the bottom of the world:—
Because I'll melt his wings.—Enough!

Garcia.

With pardon,

You are too rough.—

Duke.

Too rough! were I as loud
As shaggy Boreas in his bearish mood,—
Did I roll wheels of thunder o'er your souls,
And break them into groans,—weep yourselves
waves,

And kneel beneath my storming. Worms ye are,
Born in the fat sides of my pouring wealth:—
Lie there and stir not, or I dash you off.

Garcia. My lord—

Duke.

I am no lord, sir, but a father:

My son has stuck sharp injuries in my heart,
And flies to hide in your obscurity.
Cover him not with falsehoods ; shield him not ;
Or, by my father's ashes,—but no matter.
You said I was a duke : I will be one,
Though graves should bark for it. You've heard
me speak :

Now go not to your beds until my son
(—It is a word that cases not a meaning,—)
Come from his riots : send him then to me :
And hark ! ye fill him not, as ye are wont,
To the lip's brim with oily subterfuges. —
I sit this evening in the library.

An attend. Lights, lights there for the duke !

Duke. For the duke's soul I would there were a
light !

Well ; on thy flinty resolution strike,
Benighted man ! The sun has laid his hair
Up in that stone, as I have treasured love
In a cold heart ;—but it begins to boil,
And, if it breaks its casket, will be out.
Find me a book of fables : he, whose world
Grows in his thoughts, methinks, alone is happy.
So now good-night ; and do as I have said.

Garcia. We shall.—Good dreams, your grace !

Duke. Good acts, you mean.

He who does ill, awake, and turns to-night
For lovely-painted shades,
Is like a satyr grinning in a brook
To find Narcissus' round and downy cheek.

[*Exit with attendants : manent GARCIA
and GOMEZ.*]

Gomez. I never saw my lord so sad and angry :

His blood foamed, white with wrath, beneath his
face,

Rising and falling like a sea-shore wave.

What boils him thus?

Garcia. Perhaps some further outrage,
Reported of his son ; for the young lord,
Whose veins are stretched by passion's hottest
wine,

Tied to no law except his lawless will,
Ranges and riots headlong through the world ;—
Like a young dragon, on Hesperian berries
Purplely fed, who dashes through the air,
Tossing his wings in gambols of desire,
And breaking rain-clouds with his bulging breast.
Thus has he been from boy to youth and manhood,
Reproved, then favoured ; threatened, next for-
given ;

Renounced, to be embraced : but, till this hour,
Never has indignation like to this,
With lightning looks, black thoughts, and stony
words,

Burst o'er the palace of their love, which stretches
From heart to heart.

Gomez. I fear that both will shake ;
And that fair union, built by interchange
Of leaning kindnesses, in the recoil
May fall between, and leave no bridge for pardon.

Garcia. The little that we can, then let us strive
To hold them in the lock of amity :
For which our thoughts let us compare within.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A banqueting room in Malaspina's palace.

CYRANO, AMADEUS, TORRISMOND, and other
young lords, drinking.

Amad. Another health! Fill up the goblets,
sirrah!

This wine was pressed from full and rolling grapes
By the white dance of a Circassian princess,
Whose breast had never aught but sunlight touched,
And her own tears: 'tis spicy, cool, and clear
As is a magic fount where rainbows grow,
Or nymphs by moonlight bathe their tremulous
limbs;

And works an intellectual alchemy,
Touching the thoughts to sunshine. Now to
whom,—

To what young saint, between whose breathing
paps

Love's inspiration lies,—shall we devote
This last and richest draught: with whose soft
name

Shall we wash bright our hearts? Say, Cyrano.

Cyran. Let Torrismond be sponsor for this bowl.
He sate so still last night, that by plump Cupid,
That merry, cherry-lipped, delicious god,
Whose name is writ on roses, I must think
He's paid away his soul in broken sighs,
Glass oaths, and tears of crocodilish coinage,
For one quick finger-kiss. Ask him, what name,

Made to be written upon hearts and trees,
And grace a sonnet, shall be sugar here,
Making the juice steam music.

Torris. I beseech you,
Waste not this Araby of words on me:
I'm dull, but not in love.

Cyran. Not anle-deep?
What means a leaning head, eyelids ajar,
And lips thick-sown with whispers? Sir, I say,
Before to-morrow you'll be soused in love,
To the ear's tip. In truth, it will be so;
Sure as an almanac.

Torris. I lay my fate
Upon your mercy: e'en tie love-knots in it,
If you've nought else to do. Good Cyrano,
And you, sirs, all pray drink. I fear the fog
Of my most stupid dulness spreads.

Amad. We'll drink
One cup,—one more liquid delight, my friends;
Then for the masquerade at Signor Paulo's.—

Cyran. Ay; dedicated to the sweet To be,
The lady future of our comrade's love.

A guest. What rhymes unborn are shut within
that word!

Amad. Thus then I soak my heart's dear roots
in wine,
And the warm drops roll up and down my blood,
Till every tendril of my straying veins
Rings with delight. [*They drink.*]

And now, my sons of Bacchus,
To the delirious dance!—Nay, Torrismond,
You'll come with us at least.—

Torris. To-night, I thank you,

It is against my will ; indeed I cannot ;
I'm vilely out of tune,—my thoughts are cracked,
And my words dismal. 'Pray you, pardon me :
Some other night we will, like Bacchanals,
Shiver the air with laughter and rough songs,
And be most jovial madmen.

Amad. Be it so,
If be it must. We bid you, sir, farewell.

Torris. Good-night, good lads.

[*Exeunt AMADEUS and others : manent
TORRISMOND and CYRANO.*]

Now go, dear Cyrano ;
Let me not keep you by my wayward mood.

Cyran. If it does not offend you, suffer me—

Torris. Offend me ! No ; thou dost not,
Cyrano ;

I do offend myself. Hadst thou but eyes
To see the spirit toiling in this breast,
How low a wretch should I appear to thee ;
How pitifully weak ! Now tell me, sir,—
I shrink not from the truth, although it stab,
And beg it from your mouth,—what think you of
me ?

Cyran. Of you, my lord ?

Torris. Yes, yes ; my words, my manners,
My disposition, will,—how seem they to you ?

Cyran. Sir, my heart speaks of you as one most
kind ;

Spirited and yet mild : a man more noble
Breathes not his maker's air.

Torris. Stay, my good friend ;
I did not ask for flattery.

Cyran. Nor I answer it ;

Saying, that here I shake him by the hand
That has no better in humanity :
A fine, free spirit.

Torris. You had better say
A whirring, singing, empty wine-bubble,
Like one of these that left us. So I was ;
Vain, futile, frivolous ; a boy, a butterfly,—
In semblance : but inside, by heaven ! a depth
Of thoughts most earnest, an unfuelled flame
Of self-devouring love. *Cyrano, Cyrano,*
I yearn, and thirst, and ache to be beloved,
As I could love,—through my eternal soul,
Immutably, immortally, intensely,
Immeasurably. Oh ! I am not at home
In this December world, with men of ice,
Cold sirs and madams. That I had a heart,
By whose warm throbs of love to set my soul !
I tell thee I have not begun to live,
I'm not myself, till I've another self
To lock my dearest, and most secret thoughts in ;
Change petty faults, and whispering pardons with ;
Sweetly to rule, and Oh ! most sweetly serve.—

Cyrano. Have you no father,—nor a friend ?

Yet I,

I, *Torrismond*, am living, and the duke.

Torris. Forgive me, sir, forgive me : I am
foolish ;

I've said I know not what, I know not why ;
'Tis nothing,—fancies ; I'll to bed ;—'tis nothing ;
Worth but a smile, and then to be forgotten.
Good-night : to-morrow I will laugh at this.

Cyrano. I'll say no more but that I hope you will.

[*Exit.*

Torris. I knew it would be so. He thinks me
now

Weak, unintelligible, fanciful,—
A boy shut up in dreams, a shadow-catcher :
So let him think. My soul is where he sees not,
Around, above, below. Yes, yes ; the curse
Of being for a little world too great,
Demanding more than nature has to give,
And drinking up, for ever and in vain,
The shallow, tasteless skimmings of their love,
Through this unfathomable fever here.—
A thought of comfort comes this way ; its warmth
I feel, although I see it not. How's this ?
There's something I half know ; yes, I remember,—
The feast last night : a dear, ingenuous girl
Poured soft, smooth hope upon my dashing passions,
Until they tossed their billowy selves to sleep.
I'll seek her, try her : in this very garden
Often she walks ; thither I'll bear my wishes,
And may she prove the echo of their craving !
[*Exit.*]

SCENE III.

A garden by moonlight.

VERONICA, ELVIRA and other female attendants.

Veron. Come then, a song ; a winding, gentle
song,
To lead me into sleep. Let it be low
As zephyr, telling secrets to his rose,

For I would hear the murmuring of my thoughts ;
And more of voice than of that other music
That grows around the strings of quivering lutes ;
But most of thought ; for with my mind I listen,
And when the leaves of sound are shed upon it,
If there's no seed remembrance grows not there.
So life, so death ; a song, and then a dream !
Begin before another dewdrop fall
From the soft hold of these disturbed flowers,
For sleep is filling up my senses fast,
And from these words I sink.

Song.

How many times do I love thee, dear ?
Tell me how many thoughts there be
In the atmosphere
Of a new-fall'n year,
Whose white and sable hours appear
The latest flake of Eternity :—
So many times do I love thee, dear.

How many times do I love again ?
Tell me how many beads there are
In a silver chain
Of evening rain,
Unravell'd from the tumbling main,
And threading the eye of a yellow star :—
So many times do I love again.

Elvira. She sees no longer: leave her then
alone,
Encompassed by this round and moony night.
A rose-leaf for thy lips, and then good-night :

So life, so death ; a song, and then a dream !

[*Exeunt ELVIRA and attendants, leaving
VERONICA asleep.*]

Enter TORRISMOND.

Torris. Herself ! her very self, slumbering
gently !

Sure sleep is turned to beauty in this maid,
And all the rivalry of life and death
Makes love upon her placid face. And here,
How threads of blue, wound off yon thorny stars
That grow upon the wall of hollow night,
Flow o'er each sister-circle of her bosom,
Knotting themselves into a clue for kisses
Up to her second lip. There liquid dimples
Are ever twinkling, and a sigh has home
Deep in their red division,—a soft sigh,
Scarce would it bow the summer-weeds, when they
Play billows in the fields, and pass a look
Of sunshine through their ranks from sword to
sword,

Gracefully bending. On that cheek the blush
That ever dawns dares be no common blush,
But the faint ghost of some dishevelled rose
Unfurls its momentary leaves, and bursts
So quick the haunted fairness knows it not.
O that this gaze could be eternity !
And yet a moment of her love were more.
Were there infection in the mind's disease,
Inoculation of a thought, even now
Should she, from all the windings of her dream,
Drink my impetuous passion, and become
All that I ask. Break from your buds, dear eyes,

And draw me into you.

Veron. (awaking). Who's there? I dreamt :—
As I do love that broad, smooth-edged star,
And her young, vandyked moons that climb the night
Round their faint mother, I would not have had
Another eye peeping upon that dream,
For one of them to wear upon my breast ;
And I'll not whisper it, for fear these flags
Should chance to be the green posterity
Of that eaves-dropping, woman-witted grass,
That robbed the snoring wasps of their least voice,
To teach their feathery gossips of the air
What long, and furry ears king Midas sprouted ;
And I'll not think of it, for meditation
Oft presses from the heart its inmost wish,
And thaws its silence into straying words.

Torris. (aside). I am no man, if this dream were
not spun
By the very silk-worm that doth make his shop
In Cupid's tender wing-pit, and winds fancies
In lovers' corner thoughts, when grandam Prudence
Has swept the hearth of passion, thrown on cinders,
And gone to bed :—and she is not a woman,
If this same secret, buried in her breast,
Haunt not her tongue,—and hark ! here comes its
ghost.

Veron. A fable and a dream ! Here, in this
garden,
It seemed I was a lily :—

Torris. (aside). So you are,
But fitter for Arabian paradise,
Of those arched gardens where pale-petalled stars,
With sunlight honeying their dewy cores,

Tremble on sinuous, Corinthian necks,—
Where Morn her roses feeds, her violets Night.

Veron. And to my lily-ship a wooer came,
Sailing upon the curvous air of morn,
(For 'twas a sunny dream, and a May sky
The lid of it;) and this imagined suitor,
A glass-winged, tortoise-shell, heart-broken bee,
Was—he you know of, heart. How did he bend
His slender knee, doffing his velvet cap,
And swearing, by the taste of Venus' lip,
If I did not accept his airy love,
The truest heart, that ever told the minutes
Within an insect's breast, should shed its life
Around the hilt of his unsheathed sting.
And then this tiny thunderer of flowers,
Quite, quite subdued, let down a string of tears,
(Little they were, but full of beeish truth,)
Almost a dew-drop-much, on the fair pages
Of transmigrated me; whereon, O Love!
Thou tamed'st the straightest prude of Flora's
daughters;
For I did pity Torrismond the bee,
And let him, if his life lived in my love,
Have that for courtesy.—

Torris. (coming forward). O lady! then
Will you deny him now? when here he kneels,
And vows by heaven, and by the sacred souls
Of all the dead and living, in your pity
His hope is folded, in your soul his love,
And in that love his everlasting life.

Veron. Out on my tongue, the naughty runaway!
What has he heard? Now, if this man should be
Vain, selfish, light, or hearted with a stone,

Or worthless any way, as there are many,
I've given myself, like alms unto an idiot,
To be for nothing squandered.

Torris.

Lady, speak !

And for my truth, O that my mind were open,
My soul expressed and written in a book,
That thou might'st read and know ! Believe,
believe me !

And fear me not, for, if I speak not truth,
May I speak never more, but be struck dumb !
May I be stripped of manhood and made devil,
If I mean not as truly unto thee,
Though bold it be, as thou unto thyself !
I will not swear, for thou dost know that easy :
But put me to the proof, say, 'kill thyself ;'
I will outlabour Hercules in will,
And in performance, if that waits on will.
Shall I fight sword-less with a youthful lion ?
Shall I do ought that I may die in doing ?
Oh ! were it possible for such an angel,
I almost wish thou hadst some impious task,
That I might act it and be damned for thee.
But, earned for thee, perdition's not itself,
Since all that has a taste of thee in it
Is blest and heavenly.

Veron.

Stop ! You frighten me :

I dare not doubt you.

Torris.

Dare not ? Can you so ?

Veron. I dare not, for I cannot. I believe you :
It is my duty.

Torris.

To the dutiful

Their duty is their pleasure. Is it not ?

Veron. 'Twas a rash word ; it rather is my fate.

Torris. It is my fate to love ; thou art my fate,
So be not adverse.

Veron. How can I say further ?
I do believe you : less I'll not avow,
And more I cannot.

Torris. Stay, Veronica !
This very night we both of us may die,
Or one at least : and it is very likely
We never meet ; or, if we meet, not thus,
But somehow hindered by the time, the place,
The persons. There are many chances else,
That, though no bigger than a sunny mote,
Coming between may our whole future part,—
With Milo's force tear our existence up,
And turn away the branches of each life,
Even from this hour, on whose star-knotted trunk
We would engraft our union ! it may sever us
As utterly as if the world should split
Here, as we stand, and all Eternity
Push through the earthquake's lips, and rise between
us.

Then let us know each other's constancy :
Thou in my mind, and I in thine shall be ;
And so disseparable to the edge
Of thinnest lightning.—

Veron. Stay : be answered thus.
If thou art Torrismond, the brain of feather ;
If thou art light and empty Torrismond,
The admiration, oath, and patron-saint
Of frivolous revellers, he whose corky heart,
Pierced by a ragged pen of Cupid's wing,
Spins like a vane upon his mother's temple
In every silly sigh,—let it play on :—

Torris. It is not so ; I vow, Veronica—

Veron. If you unpeopled the Olympian town
Of all its gods, and shut them in one oath,
It would not weigh a flue of melting snow
In my opinion. Listen thus much more :
If thou art otherwise than all have held
Except myself ; if these, which men do think
The workings of thy true concentrate self,
Have been indeed but bubbles raised in sport
By the internal god, who keeps unseen
The fountains of thine undiscovered spirit ;
If, underneath this troubled scum of follies,
Lies what my hopes have guessed :—why guess thy
wishes,

What it may be unto Veronica.

Torris. What need of doubts and guesses ? make
me firm ;

With fixed assurance prop my withering hopes,
Or tear them up at once : give truth for truth.
I know it is the custom to dissemble,
Because men's hearts are shallow, and their nature
So mean, ill-nurtured, selfish, and debased,
They needs must paint and swaddle them in lies,
Before the light could bear to look upon them.
But as thou art, thus unalloyed and fresh
From thy divine creation, soul and body,
Tread artifice to dust, and boldly speak
Thine innocent resolve.

Veron.

Thus then I say :

As I believe thee steadfast and sincere,
(And, if it be not so, God pity me !)
I love thee dearly, purely, heartily ;
So witness heaven, and our own silent spirits !

Torris. And by my immortality I swear,
With the like honesty, the like to thee,
Thou picture of the heavens !

Veron. Hark ! some one comes :—
Now we must part. Henceforth remember thou,
How in this azure secrecy of night,
And with what vows, we here have dedicated
Ourselves, and our eternity of being,
Unto each other in our maker's presence.
Good-night then, Torrismond.

Torris. And such to thee,
As thou to me hast given, fairest fair !
Best good ! of thy dear kind most ever dear !
[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE IV.

An apartment in the ducal palace.

Enter the DUKE and courtiers.

Duke. Yes, was it not enough, good Garcia,—
Blood spilt in every street by his wild sword ;
The reverend citizens pelted with wrongs,
Their rights and toil-won honours blown aside,
Torn off, and trampled 'neath his drunken foot ;
The very daughters of the awful church
Smeared in their whiteness by his rude attempts ;
The law thus made a lie even in my mouth ;
Myself a jest for beer-pot orators ;
My state dishonoured ;—was it not enough
To turn a patience, made of ten-years' ice,

Into a thunderbolt ?

Garcia. It was too much :
I wonder at your grace's long endurance.
Did you ne'er chide him ?

Duke. No, never in his life :
He has not that excuse. My eyes and ears
Were frozen-closed. Yet was it not enough
That his ill deeds outgrew all name and number,
O'er-flowed his years and all men's memories ?
Gaudentio, I was mild ; I bore upon me
This world of wrongs, and smiled. But mark you
now,

How he was grateful.—Tell them, Melchior.

Melch. Linked, as it is surmised, with Lutherans,
And other rebels 'gainst his father's state,
He has not only for their aid obtained
From me, the steward of the dukedom, money,
But also robbed, most treacherously robbed,
By night, and like a thief, the public treasury.

Gauden. I'll not believe it ; and he is a villain,
Ay, and the very thief, that did the thing,
Who brings the accusation.

Duke. Knave, I think
Thou wert my son's accomplice.

Melch. Nay, my lord,
He says what all would say, and most myself,
But that these facts—

Gauden. What facts ? What witnesses ?
Who saw ? Who heard ? Who knows ?

Duke. Our trusty steward.

Gauden. A Spanish Jew ! a godless, heartless
exile,
Whose ear's the echo of the whispering world.

Why, if *he* only knows, and saw, and heard,
This Argus-witness, with his blood-hound nose,
Who keeps a fairy in his upright ear,
Is no more than a black, blind, ugly devil,
Nick-named a lie.

Duke. Be silent, slave, or dead.
I do believe him : Garcia, so dost thou ?
All honest men, good Melchior, like thyself,—
For that thou art, I think, upon my life,—
Believe thee too.

Melch. It is my humble trust :
And, in the confidence of honesty,
I pray you pardon this good servant's boldness.
(*Aside*) God help the miserable velvet fellow !
It seems he has forgot that little story,
How he debauched my poor, abandoned sister,
And broke my family into the grave.—
That's odd ; for I exceeding well remember it,
Though then a boy.

Duke. Gaudentio, thou dost hear
Why I forgive thee : but be cautious, sir.

Gauden. Cautious,—but honest,—cautious of a
villain.

Duke. No more !—But see where comes the
man we talk of.

Leave us together. [*Exeunt courtiers.*]

Enter TORRISMOND.

Torrismond, well met !—

Torris. Why then well parted, for I'm going to
bed.

I'm weary ; so, good-night.

Duke. Stay ; I must speak to you, —

Torris. To-morrow then, good father, and all day,
But now no more than the old sleepy word,
And so again, good-night.

Duke. Turn, sir, and stay :
I will be brief, as brief as speech can be.—
Seek elsewhere a good night : there is none here.
This is no home for your good nights, bad son,
Who hast made evil all my days to come,
Poisoned my age, torn off my beauteous hopes
And fed my grave with them.—Oh ! thou hast now,
This instant, given my death an hundred sinews,
And drawn him nearer by a thousand hours.
But what of that ? You'd sow me like a grain,
And from my stalk pick you a ducal crown.
But I will live.—

Torris. That you may live and prosper
Is every day my prayer, my wish, my comfort.
But what offence has raised these cruel words ?

Duke. That I may live, you plot against my life ;
That I may prosper, you have cured my fortunes
Of their encrusted jaundice,—you have robbed me.
So, for your prayers and wishes I do thank you ;
But for your deeds I wish and pray Heaven's
vengeance.

Torris. Is this your own invention, or—O nature !
O love of fathers ! could a father hear
His offspring thus accused, and yet believe ?
Believe ! Could he endure, and not strike dead,
The monster of the lie ? Sir, here or there,
You, or your informers, there's a villain,
End of falsehood : so beware injustice !

Duke. I never was unjust, but when I pardoned
My bloody sins and ravening appetites, —

For which Heaven pardon me, as I repent it !
 But I'll not play at battledore with words.
 Hear me, young man, in whom I did express
 The venom of my nature, thus the son,
 Not of my virtuous will, but foul desires,
 Not of my life, but of a wicked moment,
 Not of my soul, but growing from my body,
 Like thorns or poison on a wholesome tree,
 The rank excrescence of my tumid sins,—
 And so I tear thee off : for, Heaven doth know,
 All gentler remedies I have applied ;
 But to this head thy rankling vice has swelled,
 That, if thou dwellest in my bosom longer,
 Thou wilt infect my blood, corrode my heart,
 And blight my being : therefore, off for ever !

Torris. O mother, thou art happy in thy grave !
 And there's the hell in which my father lies,
 The serpent that hath swallowed him !

GAUDENTIO rushes in.

Gauden. (as he enters, to those without, the other
 courtiers, who also enter but remain
 at the side). Away !

Let me come in ! . . Now, I beseech you, lords,
 Put out this anger ; lay a night of sleep
 Upon its head, and let its pulse of fire
 Flap to exhaustion. Do not, sir, believe
 This reptile falsehood : think it o'er again,
 And try him by yourself ; thus questioning,
 Could I, or did I, thus, or such a fault,
 In my beginning days ? There stands before you
 The youth and golden top of your existence,
 Another life of yours : for, think your morning

Not lost, but given, passed from your hand to his
 The same except in place. Be then to him
 As was the former tenant of your age,
 When you were in the prologue of your time,
 And he lay hid in you unconsciously
 Under his life. And thou, my younger master,
 Remember there's a kind of god in him,
 And after heaven the next of thy religion.
 Thy second fears of God, thy first of man,
 Are his, who was creation's delegate,
 And made this world for thee in making thee.

Duke. A frost upon thy words, intended dog !
 Because thy growth has lost its four-legged way
 And wandered with thee into man's resemblance,
 Shalt thou assume his rights ? Get to thy bed,
 Or I'll decant thy pretext of a soul,
 And lay thee, worm, where thou shalt multiply.
 Sir slave, your gibbet's sown.

Torris. Leave him, Gaudentio
 My father and your master are not here ;
 His good is all gone hence, he's truly dead ;
 All that belonged to those two heavenly names
 Are gone from life with him, and changing cast
 This slough behind, which all abandoned sins
 Creep into and enliven devilishly.

Duke. What ! stand I in thy shadow ? or ha
 Momus
 Opened a window 'twixt thy heart and mine ?
 'Tis plated then !

Torris. We talk like fighting boys :—
 'ut on't ! I repent of my mad tongue.
 ne, sir ; I cannot love you after this,
 we may meet and pass a nodding question—

Duke. Never ! There lies no grain of sand between
My loved and my detested. Wing thee hence,
Or thou dost stand to-morrow on a cob-web
Spun o'er the well of clotted Acheron,
Whose hydrophobic entrails steam with fire ;
And may this intervening earth be snow,
And my step burn like the mid coal of *Ætna*,
Plunging me, through it all, into the core
Where in their graves the dead are shut like seeds,
If I do not—O but he is my son !
If I do not forgive thee then—but hence !
Gaudentio, hence with him, for in my eyes
He does look demons.—

Melch. (to Torrismoud). Come out with me and
leave him :

You will be cool, to-morrow.

Torris. That I shall ;
Cool as an ice-drop on the skull of Death,
For winter is the season of the tomb,
And that's my country now.

Duke. Away with him !
I will not hear.—Where did I leave my book ?
Or was it music ?—Take the beggar out.
Is there no supper yet ?—O my good Melchior !
I'm an eternal gap of misery.—
Let's talk of something else.

Torris. O father, father ! must I have no father,
To think how I shall please, to pray for him,
To spread his virtues out before my thought,
And set my soul in order after them ?
To dream, and talk of in my dreaming sleep ?
If I have children, and they question me
Of him who was to me as I to them

Who taught me love, and sports, and childish lore ;
Placed smiles where tears had been ; who bent his
talk,

That it might enter my low apprehension,
And laughed when words were lost.—O father,
father !

Must I give up the first word that my tongue,
The only one my heart has ever spoken ?
Then take speech, thought, and knowledge quite
away,—

Tear all my life out of the universe,
Take of my youth, unwrap me of my years,
And hunt me up the dark and broken past
Into my mother's womb : there unbegot me ;
For 'till I'm in thy veins and unbegun,
Or to the food returned which made the blood
That did make me, no possible lie can ever
Unroot my feet of thee. Canst thou make nothing ?
Then do it here, for I would rather be
At home nowhere, than here nowhere at home.

Duke. Why ask'st thou me ? Hast thou no
deeds to undo,

No virtues to rebuy, no sins to loose ?
Catch from the wind those sighs that thou hast
caused ;

Out of large ocean pick the very tears,
And set them in their cabinets again.
Renew thyself, and then will I remember
How thou camest thus. Thou art all vices now
Of thine own getting. My son *Torrismond*
Did sow himself under a heap of crime,
And thou art grown from him : die to the root,
So I may know thee as his grave at least.—

Now, Melchior, we'll away.

Melch. Not yet, my lord :
I wait upon this gentleman.

Duke. Is't so ?
Why then, begone ! Good morrow to you, sirs.
Farewell ! and be that word a road to death
Uncrossed by any other ! Not a word !

[*Exit with courtiers: manent* TORRISMOND
and MELCHIOR.

Melch. Will you not stay ?

He's gone : but follow not :—
There's not a speck of flesh upon his heart !
What shall we do ?

Torris. What shall we do ?—why, all.
How many things, sir, do men live to do ?
The mighty labour is to die : we'll do't,—
But we'll drive in a chariot to our graves,
Wheel'd with big thunder, o'er the heads of men.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

Enter TORRISMOND.

Torris. Then here's an end of life.

(END OF MS.)



THE LAST MAN.



[From indications in the MSS. of Beddoes it appears that the fragments with which this volume closes were intended to form parts of two five-act tragedies, "The Last Man," and "Love's Arrow Poisoned." They have, therefore, been collected here under those general titles, although little trace of the plot of either drama can be distinguished.]



THE LAST MAN.

DIANEME and female attendants.

Dianeme.

SING on, sing ever, and let sighs arise
Beneath the current of your harmony,
Breaking its silvery stillness into gushes
Of stealing sadness: let tears fall upon it,
And burst with such a sound, as when a lute-
string,

Torn by the passion of its melody,
Gasps its whole soul of music in one sound,
And dies beneath the waves of its own voice!
Be pale thou mooned midnight, and ye stars
Shed fluttering tremours of inconstant light
Upon the moaning billows; timid leaves
O'erwhelm yourselves with shadow, and give out
Your dewy titterings to the air no more!
Clouds, clouds, dark, deadly clouds, let not the
moon

Look on his grave!—It is too light: the day
Will rise before I die: how old is evening?

Attend. The tide of darkness now is at its
height.

Yon lily-woven cradle of the hours
Hath floated half her shining voyage, nor yet
Is by the current of the morn opposed.

Dianeme. The hour is coming : I must give my
soul

To the same moment on whose precious air
My Casimir soared heavenward, for I know
There are a million chambers of the dead,
And every other minute but the same
Would bear me to the one where he is not,
And that were madness. Bring me yon sick lily,—
Yon fevered one.

Attend. Choose any other, lady,
For this is broken, odourless, and scorched,—
Where Death has graved his curse.

Dianeme. Give it to me ;
I'll weep it full. I have a love for flowers :
Guess you not why ? Their roots are in the earth,
And, when the dead awake, or talk in sleep,
These hear their thoughts and write them on their
leaves

For heaven to look on : and their dew comes
down

From the deep bosom of the blue, whereon
The spirits linger, sent by them perchance
With blessings to their friends. Besides all night
They are wide-waking, and the ghosts will pause,
And breathe their thoughts upon them. There,
poor blossom,

My soul bedews thee, and my breast shall be
Thy death-bed, and our deaths shall intertwine.
Now, maids, farewell ; this is the very echo
Of his expiring time ; one snowy cloud

Hangs, like an avalanche of frozen light,
 Upon the peak of night's cerulean Alp,
 And yon still pine, a bleak anatomy,
 Flows, like a river, on the planet's disk,
 With its black, wandering arms. Farewell to all :
 There is my hand to weep on.

Now my soul

Developes its great beams, and, like a cloud
 Racked by the mighty winds, at once expands
 Into a measureless, immortal growth.
 Crescented night, and amethystine stars,
 And day, thou god and glory of the heavens,
 Flow on for ever ! Play, ye living spheres,
 Through the infinity of azure wafted
 On billowy music ! Airs immortal, strew
 Your tressed beauty on the clouds and seas !
 And thou the sum of these, nature of all,
 Thou providence pervading the whole space
 Of measureless creation ; thou vast mind,
 Whose thoughts these pageantries and seasons are,
 Who claspest all in one imagination,
 All hail ! I too am an eternity ;
 I am an universe. My soul is bent
 Into a girdling circle full of days ;
 And my fears rise through the deep sky of it,
 Blossoming into palpitating stars ;
 And suns are launched, and planets wake within
 me ;

The words upon my breath are showery clouds,
 Sailing along a summer ; Casimir
 Is the clear truth of ocean, to look back
 The beams of my soft love, the world to turn
 Within my blue embrace. I am an heaven,

And he my breezes, rays, and harmony ;
 'Round and around the curvous atmosphere
 Of my own real existence I revolve,
 Serene and starry with undying love.
 I am, I have been, I shall be, O glory !
 An universe, a god, a living Ever.

[*She dies.*]

RECOGNITION.

SOFT ! Stand away ! those features—Do not stir !
 Be breathless if thou canst ! . . The trembling ray
 Of some approaching thought, I know not what,
 Gleams on my darkened mind. It will be here
 Directly : now I feel it growing, growing,
 Like a man's shadow, when the sun floats slowly
 Through the white border of a baffled cloud :
 And now the pale conception furls and thickens.
 'Tis settled,—Yes—Beroë !—How dare thy cheek
 Be wan and withered as a wrinkling moon
 Upon the tumbled waves ? Why cam'st thou here ?
 I dreamt of thee last night, as thou wert once,
 But I shall never dream of thee again.

RECEPTION OF EVIL TIDINGS.

WHAT'S this ? Did you not see a white convulsion
 Run through his cheek and fling his eye-lids up ?
 There's mischief in the paper.

Mark again

How, with that open palm, he shades his brain
 From its broad, sudden meaning. Once I saw
 One who had dug for treasure in a corner,
 Where he, by torchlight, saw a trembling man

Burying a chest at night. Just so he stood
With open striving lips and shaking hair ;
Alive but in his eyes, and they were fixed
On a smeared, earthly, bleeding corpse—his sister,
There by her murderer crushed into the earth.

A RUFFIAN.

THERE's a fellow
With twisting root-like hair up to his eyes,
And they are streaked with red and starting out
Under their bristling brows ; his crooked tusks
Part, like a hungry wolf's, his cursing mouth ;
His head is frontless, and a swinish mane
Grows o'er his shoulders :—brown and warty hands,
Like roots, with pointed nails.—He is the man.

RECOLLECTION OF EARLY LIFE.

LEAF after leaf, like a magician's book
Turned in a dragon-guarded hermitage
By tress-disheveling spirits of the air,
My life unfolds.

A CROCODILE.

HARD by the liliated Nile I saw
A duskish river-dragon stretched along,
The brown habergeon of his limbs enamelled
With sanguine almandines and rainy pearl :
And on his back there lay a young one sleeping,
No bigger than a mouse ; with eyes like beads,
And a small fragment of its speckled egg
Remaining on its harmless, pulpy snout ;
A thing to laugh at, as it gaped to catch

The baulking, merry flies. In the iron jaws
 Of the great devil-beast, like a pale soul
 Fluttering in rocky hell, lightsomely flew
 A snowy troculus, with roseate beak
 Tearing the hairy leeches from his throat.

“BONA DE MORTUIS.”

AY, ay: *good man, kind father, best of friends*—
 These are the words that grow, like grass and
 nettles,
 Out of dead men, and speckled hatreds hide,
 Like toads, among them.

ROSELY DYING.

I'LL take that fainting rose
 Out of his breast ; perhaps some sigh of his
 Lives in the gyre of its kiss-coloured leaves.
 O pretty rose, hast thou thy flowery passions?
 Then put thyself into a scented rage,
 And breathe on me some poisonous revenge.
 For it was I, thou languid, silken blush,
 Who orphaned thy green family of thee,
 In their closed infancy : therefore receive
 My life, and spread it on thy shrunken petals,
 And give to me thy pink, reclining death.

SPEAKER'S MEANING DIMLY DESCRIBED.

I KNOW not whether
 see your meaning : if I do, it lies
 on the wordy wavelets of your voice,
 in as an evening shadow in a brook,

When the least moon has silver on't no larger,
Than the pure white of Hebe's pinkish nail.

ANTICIPATION OF EVIL TIDINGS.

I FEAR there is some maddening secret
Hid in your words, (and at each turn of thought
Comes up a skull,) like an anatomy
Found in a weedy hole, 'mongst stones and roots
And straggling reptiles, with his tongueless mouth
Telling of murder.

MIDNIGHT HYMN.

AND many voices marshalled in one hymn
Wound through the night, whose still translucent
moments
Lay on each side their breath; and the hymn
passed
Its long, harmonious populace of words
Between the silvery silences, as when
The slaves of Egypt, like a wind between
The head and trunk of a dismembered king
On a strewn plank, with blood and footsteps sealed,
Vallied the unaccustomed sea.

CONCEALED JOY.

JUST now a beam of joy hung on his eye-lash;
But, as I looked, it sunk into his eye,
Like a bruised worm writhing its form of rings
Into a darkening hole.

LIFE A GLASS WINDOW.

LET him lean
Against his life, that glassy interval
'Twixt us and nothing ; and, upon the ground
Of his own slippery breath, draw hueless dreams,
And gaze on frost-work hopes. Uncourteous
Death
Knuckles the pane, and * * *

A DREAM.

LAST night I looked into a dream ; 'twas drawn
On the black midnight of a velvet sleep,
And set in woeful thoughts ; and there I saw
A thin, pale Cupid, with bare, ragged wings
Like skeletons of leaves, in autumn left,
That sift the frosty air. One hand was shut,
And in its little hold of ivory
Fastened a May-morn zephyr, frozen straight,
Made deadly with a hornet's rugged sting,
Gilt with the influence of an adverse star.
Such was his weapon, and he traced with it,
Upon the waters of my thoughts, these words :
" I am the death of flowers, and nightingales,
And small-lipped babes, that give their souls to
summer
To make a perfumed day with : I shall come,
A death no larger than a sigh to thee,
Upon a sunset hour."—And so he passed
Into the place where faded rainbows are,
Dying along the distance of my mind ;

As down the sea Europa's hair-pearls fell
When, through the Cretan waves, the curly bull
Dashed, tugging at a stormy plough, whose share
Was of the northern hurricane—

METAPHOR OF RAIN.

AN amorous cloud
Lets down her rustling hair over the sun

MEDITATION.

THE bitter past
And the untasted future I mix up,
Making the present a dream-figured bowl
For the black poison, which is caked and moulded,
By the inside of the enchasing thoughts,
Even as I taste it.

SWEET TO DIE.

Is it not sweet to die? for, what is death,
But sighing that we ne'er may sigh again,
Getting at length beyond our tedious selves;
But trampling the last tear from poisonous sorrow,
Spilling our woes, crushing our frozen hopes,
And passing like an incense out of man?
Then, if the body felt, what were its sense,
Turning to daisies gently in the grave,
If not the soul's most delicate delight
When it does filtrate, through the pores of thought
In love and the enamelled flowers of song?

But for this man, his life wears ever steel
 From which disease drops blunted. If indeed
 Death lay in the market-place, or were—but hush !
 See you the tremble of that myrtle bough ?
 Does no one listen ?

B. Nothing with a tongue :
 The grass is dumb since Midas, and no Æsop
 Translates the crow or hog. Within the myrtle
 Sits a hen-robin, trembling like a star,
 Over her brittle eggs.

A. Is it no more ?

B. Nought : let her hatch.

KISSES.

HER kisses are
 Soft as a snow-tuft in the dewless cup
 Of a redoubled rose, noiselessly falling
 When heaven is brimful of starry night.

SUBTERRANEAN CITY.

CAN it then be, that the earth loved some city,
 Another planet's child, so long, so truly,
 That here we find its image next her heart,
 Like an abandoned, melancholy thought
 Yet legible ?

DREAM OF DYING.

SHIVERING in fever, weak, and parched to sand,
 My ears, those entrances of word-dressed thoughts,
 My pictured eyes, and my assuring touch,

Fell from me, and my body turned me forth
From its beloved abode : then I was dead ;
And in my grave beside my corpse I sat,
In vain attempting to return : meantime
There came the untimely spectres of two babes,
And played in my abandoned body's ruins ;
They went away ; and, one by one, by snakes
My limbs were swallowed ; and, at last, I sat
With only one, blue-eyed, curled round my ribs,
Eating the last remainder of my heart,
And hissing to himself. O sleep, thou fiend !
Thou blackness of the night ! how sad and frightful
Are these thy dreams !

INSIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORLD.

WHY what's the world and time ? a fleeting
thought
In the great meditating universe,
A brief parenthesis in chaos.





LOVE'S ARROW POISONED.





LOVE'S ARROW POISONED.

SCENE I.

ERMINIA *and female attendant.*

Attend.

COME lift your head from that sad pillow,
lady,
Let comfort kiss thee dry. Nay, weep
no more :

Oh ! sure thy brain has emptied all its tears,
Thy breast outsigned its passion, leaving room
For sleep to pour her sweetness into them,
And the cored sleep of sleep, tranquillity,
That opens but one window of the soul,
And, with her hand on sorrow's face, does keep her
Dark in her bed and dayless. Quiet now—
Will you take peace ?

Ermin. Good-night ; you must go in :
The door of life is shut upon me now ;
I'm sepulchred alone. Look in the west ;
Mark you the dusty, weary traveller,
That stumbles down the clouds ?

Attend. I see the sun
Silently dying.

Ermin. Weep till your sight is found.—
I have been one that thought there was a sun,
A joyful heat-maker ; and, like a child
By a brook's side spooning the sparkles out,
I caught at his reflection in my soul,
And found 'twas water painted with a lie,
Cold, bitter water ; I have cried it out.
Sometimes you may see some one through the cloud
Stepping about the sky, —and then, in sooth,
He robs some mountain of its child, the day,
And lays it at the sea's door : but for that
I' the west, 'tis the fat, unwholesome star,
The bald fool-planet, that has men upon it,
And they nick-name it 'world.'
And oh ! this humpy bastard of the sun,
It was my slave, my dog, and in my lap
Laid down its load of pleasure every night,
And spun me sunshine to delight my eyes, --
Carried my cities, and did make me summer,
And flower-limbed spring, and groves with shade
autumn :

But now the whelp rolls up his woody back,
And turns it on me, and so trundles down,
Leaving this bit of rock for me to live on,
And his round shadow to be cold in. Go !
Follow the rabble clinging at his heels,
Get thee a seat among his rags. — Dost know
That Momus picked a burnt-out comet up
From Vulcan's floor, and stuck a man upon it ;
Then, having laught, he flung the wick away,
And let the insect feed on planet oil : —

What was't? Man and his ball.

Attend.

O dearest lady!

Let not your thoughts find instruments of mirth
So on the shore where reason has been wrecked,
To lay them in your brain along with grief;
For grief and laughter, mingled in the skull,
Oft boil to madness. Did you hear my words?

Ermin. Ay, comfort was among them,—that's a
play-thing

For girls, a rattle full of noisy lies
To fright away black thoughts, and let the sun
In on the breast. For madness, though I hold it
Kinder to man's enjoyment than true sense,
And I would choose it, if they lay before me,
Even as a grape beside an adder's tongue,
To squeeze into my thoughts as in a cup,
Hating the forked and the bitter truth,—
I cannot find it. If my brain were capable
Of this dear madness, should it not be now
All in a bubble with't? What can make mad,
If not the abandonment of one, whose love
Is more true life than the veins' crimson sap?
Leonigild has cut my heart away,
And flung it from him: if I could be so,
Should I not be tempestuously mad?

Attend. Alas! his cruelty looked like a snake
Upon Medusa's temple.

Ermin.

Had I been waked

By torchlight in my eyes, and by a voice
That said "your babes are burning, stabbed your
husband,—

Room on your bosom for their murderer's kisses!"
Why, that to this were tickling to a stab,

A pin-wound to an hell-jawed, laughing gash.
You saw me spurned by him who was—Oh! was!—
What was he? not a father, son, or husband,—
Lend me a word.—

Attend. Indeed your love was much ;
Your life but an inhabitant of his.

Ermin. Loved him ! 'tis not enough ; the angels
might,—
They might think what I mean, but could not
speak it.

I dreamt it was the day of judgment once,
And that my soul, in fear of hidden sins,
Went with his stolen body on its shoulders,
And stood for him before the judgment seat :—
O that I now were damned as I was then !
But that same body, that same best-loved soul
Cursed, spurned me yesterday. Should I not rave,
Rave, my girl, rave?

Attend. So most women would,
So all would wonder that another did not.

Ermin. Why now, I rave not, laugh not, think
not, care not ;
But it is well ; so far, I said, 'twas well.
Next was I not abandoned on the rock,
That I might starve? and then you know I prayed,
And when 'twas done, behold ! there comes a boat,
Climbing about the waves ; I thought and said,
O bless thee, ocean ! hither dost thou come,
On the same errand as thy birds returning
Unto their hungry nest ; thus has sweet nature
Sown kindness in thy great, and its small, bosom !
And, as I spoke, the waves came sporting on,
And laid their burthen, like a pillow, here :

Look ! it's my brother dead. Should I not rave,
Rave, my girl, rave ? What comet-dragon is there,
That makes the air bleed fire with galloping rage,
But should be dove-like in my simile ?

Attend. Alas ! such things,
Such sudden pluckings by the heart as these,
People the mad-house, and cram up the grave !

Ermin. Therefore I laugh : methinks, when I do
tell it,
That I am supping up a draught of wine.
Would you know why there's death, and tears, and
blood,

And wrenching hearts out by their shrieking roots,
Which are more tender than the mailed quick,
Or the wet eye-ball ? I will tell you this,—
But O ! be secret as rocks under sea,—
When the world draws the winter o'er his head,
Capping himself so whitely round his Alp,
Muffling his feet with ice, and beds him so ;
Then underneath the coverlid and cloak
He has a poisonous strumpet in his arms,
On whom he gets confusion, war, disease,
Prodigies, earthquakes, blights : she's in his blood,
The hell-wombed witch, hagged and hideous nature !
But I'll unwind her.—Nay, I jest, my child :
Leave me ; seek something—What is it we want ?
O true ! 'tis food : take this, and try the huts.

Attend. 'Tis needful truly : I'll procure it quick,
And turn the hour back I go upon.
A little then, good-bye. [Exit.

Ermin. Yes, I do see
The wronger, and will cut her from my heart,—
Pare myself of her utterly. Thou nature,

Living or dead, thou influence or thou ruler,
I invoke the heaven to hear my charge.
Who tied my heart unto Leonigild
With gordian love-knots of its thousand strings,
Then tore them all away to bleed and wither?
Was it not nature?
Who quickened next that heart a lovely babe,
And when its little smile had learnt its mother,
When thought was rising in its heavenly eye,
Bade the grave jump and snap it? The same nature,
Here lies a brother in my dead embrace,
Loved after, as before, his human life;
For in each other's unborn arms we lay,
Bedfellows in our mother. Who poisoned him,
Alone among the horrible sea-waves,
And then—O murderess above fratricide,
To kill the sister with the brother's corpse!—
Sent him a gift to me? Again 'twas nature.
I had a husband; nature widowed me:—
A child; she kidnapped it to earth a tree:—
A brother; him she murdered with her waves:—
Me she would madden:—therefore I defy,
Curse, and abandon Nature henceforth ever.
And, though I cannot creep up to my mother,
Or flow back to my father's veins again,—
Resex or uncreate me; thus much can I:
I will sponge out the sweetness of my heart,
And suck up horror; woman's thoughts I'll kill,
And leave their bodies rotting in my mind,
Hoping their worms will sting; although not man,
Yet will I out of hate engender much,
I'll be the father of a world of ghosts,
And get the grave with a carcase. For the rest,

I will encorpse me in my brother's garments,
 Pick me a heart out of a devil's side,
 And so, my own creator, my own child,
 Tread on the womb of nature, unbegotten.
 Now then, ye waves, I step on you again,
 And into my new self, my life outlived :
 Come back and kneel, thou world ; submit thy side,
 And take me on thy neck again, new-made,
 Fiend-hearted, woman-corpsed, but man-arrayed.

II.

Ermin. Is it Zenobio ?

Zenob. Ay, that's my body's name, for my dear
 soul

Is not so called : when you would speak of that,
 Which is myself more than the thing you see,
 Only say " Erminia."—And what readeth she,
 Who called Zenobio ?

Ermin. An unhappy tale
 Of two who loved, with so unusual faith,
 That their affection rose up into heaven,
 And there was deified : (for the blind child,
 Whom men of this late world invoke and swear by,
 Is the usurper of that first love's name,
 Indeed an idol, a false deity :)
 —A pedant's dream !

Zenob. We know it to be so.
 For not externally this love can live,
 But in the soul, as life within the body :
 And what is Love alone ? Are there not two ?
 —But, dearest, you were telling--

Ermin. Of this pair :
 One from the beauty and the grace of youth,
 One, innocent and youthful, perished.
 The other,—what could she, O widowed thing !
 With but a pale and fading memory
 Left in the hollow of her heart ?

Zenob. What could she ?
 But let her deathly life pass into death,
 Like music on the night-wind ; moaning, moaning,
 Until it sleeps.

Ermin. Worse, worse, much worse than that,
 Or aught else of despair or common madness.
 Cheerfully did she live, quietly end
 A joyous age alone ! This is to me
 More woeful, and more murderous of hope,
 Than any desperate story.

Zenob. So it would be,
 If thought on with the general sense of man.
 But know this surely : in that woman's breast
 Lived the two souls, that were before divided.
 For otherwise, be sure, she *could* not live ;
 But so, much happier than ever.

III.

Philomela. OUT of the gusts of sorrow, cushion
 the thorns
 Of pain with blossoms ; and from tears distil
 Sedate delight. He would not spell the stars,
 But, turning inward, with his heart debate
 The mystery of his actions, and to Destiny
 Dictate her motions. This has misery taught me—

Enter IPPOLITO.

Welcome at last ! You have been dilatory ;
Was it in meditation ? Have you weighed
Our last discourse ? If thou had'st rather leave me,
If thou had'st rather give up my poor love,
Fear not to say so.

Ipp. Thou dost wrong my heart ;
You know my soul is in thy life. Is this
Caprice ? Is it the cunning of a woman
Still doubting and scarce wishing to believe
Her lover's protestations ? Or the hope
That the first treachery should be mine ?

Phil. This hour
Is for great deeds, our genius is awaiting
The last decision. Do not trifle then,
It is unkind. How is thy soul resolved ?

Ipp. How ? I have said already. 'Tis my choice
To fly with thee ; thou art my only life.

Phil. Thine only life ! Ippolito, look up :
Who is above us ? He, whose word forbids
The meditated crime ; He, who will punish
Its perpetrator.

Ipp. None of that ! You cannot,
You cannot by your direst arguments,
Decrease my love,—thou mayest embitter it.
What need of talking ? Love and confidence
Know not the tongue. Come, let us haste away.

Phil. Must we then go ? Alas ! I hoped indeed
The silence and the settling of thy spirits
Might teach thee truer wishes.

Ipp. Let us go,
If Philomela really loves me.

Phil. Well, be it so! and heaven with mercy
pardon

The last sad effort of a wretched girl.
But turn, oh turn again! Look on the fate
That follows our retreat; disgrace and fear,
Remorse, despair and death without God's help.

Ipp. Delay no more—there is one antidote
For every earthly ill, enduring love;
And if we sin, we sin and fall together.
Come, come!—away with fear; we *must* be happy.

Phil. We will then. Yes! we travel to some
home

Where never tear bedewed the blooming weed,
Where never sigh stole sorrowing thro' the air,
Some magic bower of love and harmony.

Ipp. Haste we! then haste!

Phil. 'Tis but a moment's journey,
Our sure conveyance here! [*Produces two goblets.*

Ipp. Ha! what is this?

Phil. The bower I spoke of is in Paradise,
The love I thought of is a heavenly love.
If thou wilt share it, drink.

Ipp. Hold! is it poison?

Phil. 'Tis life! so pledge me. To our loves!
Now then [*Drinks the poison.*

My journey is begun.

Ipp. I follow thee. [*Drinks out of his cup.*
Alas! what have we done! oh! Philomela,
What wickedness is this?

Phil. 'Tis the best crime
Our misery allowed us. But be hopeful yet;
Thou art no suicide; I murdered thee,
God knows it and is just. I claim the torture.

Ipp. Too cruel girl. Wilt thou upon my death-bed

Drive me away from thee? rob me of the right
Of suffering with thee? It had then been better
That we had lived.

Phil. No! then thou had'st been punished,
Thou had'st been wrecked then! Now I have
saved thee;

Go into bliss and never be thy breast
Afflicted even with my memory.

Ipp. Oh! I am faint. Ah! must I leave you
here?

My love, come near me. Art thou following?

Phil. Alas! 'tis all my sorrow that I cannot.
I am thy murderess and my own.

Ipp. Oh God!

Do not thou hear her. I am the sole author
Of all this misery; 'twas my fatal passion.

Visit it all on me. [Falls.

Phil. 'Tis I, 'tis I.

His eye is closed; my love! He hears me not,
But looks as if he loved. Now I shall see him
No more. Oh! hell is made of those two words.
Speak to me; kiss me; look on me! 'Tis done.

Enter ALMARIA, MONTONI and URSULI.

Alm. There is one triumph! Now, my father,
sleep!

Thine anger is appeased. They die most bravely.

Phil. Who speaks? who's there?

Alm. Oh God! what's this? my child,
Thy voice is changed.

Phil. It still can bless my mother.

The blow is come at last. Forgive me then,
I know I lived too long; thou hast not loved me
Lately so well,—but love me now I die.

Alm. Then, do ye hear or see? Why stand ye
there,

With your cold gazing eyes? Away! ye'll kill her;
She's mine, and thine, thou wretch. Will ye per-
mit it?

'Tis murder, murder!

Urs. Help is all too late,

We can but weep.

Alm. You weep? What right have you?
No one shall weep but I. Child, speak to me!

Mont. They are both dead, and God has suffered
it.

Phil. Not yet, but I am near it; he but sleeps,
His was a harmless draught. When he awakes
Tell him I charge him love and pray for me.
And now, my mother—

*[Raises herself up to embrace her mother,
falls back and dies.]*

Alm. Save her! hold her up!

Oh mercy, mercy!

Urs. Her soul is not here.

Alm. Devil, thou liest! Thou hast destroyed
my daughter.

Think of it on thy death-bed! Philomela!
Awake! awake! don't die, thy mother bids thee!
She breathes,—yes, yes, she breathes! She will
grow better.

Mont. My lovely daughter, heaven receive with
mercy

Thy spotless spirit.

Alm. Well, then, she is dead !
This is thy work. Thou knew'st I was a woman,
Weak, passionate and foolish, so you bent me
To your curst purpose. Devil, haunt me not !
Go now, you've seen enough. Now then, my
daughter,
We will lie down, and never will I rise
From thy dear side, nor ever speak again.

Urs. Montoni, speak ! Why are thy looks so
fixed ?

Mont. I ask not comfort, heaven, but spare my
reason !

[*Falls into the arms of URSULI.*

Curtain falls.

IV.

SCENE : *the abyss of Space* : AMBROSIOUS and CYN-
THIA *in the car, returning to the earth.* AM-
BROSIOUS *loquitur.*

O WHAT a deep delight it is to cleave,
Out-darting thought, above all sight and sound,
And sweep the ceiling of the universe,
Thus with our locks ! How it does mad the heart,
How dances it along the living veins,
Like hot and steaming wine ! How my eyes ache
With gazing on this mighty vacancy !
O Universe of earth and air and ocean,
Which man calls infinite, where art thou now ?
Sooner a babe should pierce the marble ear
Of death, and startle his tombed ancestor,

'Mid Hell's thick laughter, shrieks, and flamy
noises,

With cradle-pulings, than the gathered voice

Of every thunder, ocean, and wild blast,

Find thee, thou atom, in this wilderness !

This boundless emptiness, this waveless sea,

This desert of vacuity, alone

Is great : and thou, for whom the world was made,

Art as the wren's small goblet of a home

Unto the holy vastness of the temple !

* * * * *

V.

WHY, Rome was naked once, a bastard smudge,

Tumbled on straw, the denfellow of whelps,

Fattened on roots, and, when a-thirst for milk,

He crept beneath and drank the swagging udder

(Of Tiber's brave she-wolf, and Heaven's Judea

Was folded in a new



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